

Collaborative Language Learning in Higher Education:  
Student Engagement and Language Self-Efficacy

in a Communicative, Flipped Context

by

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## **ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how collaborative language learning activities affected student perceptions of their engagement and language self-efficacy in a communicative, flipped language learning classroom in higher education. The new online platforms accompanying many textbooks now allow students to prepare for classes ahead of time, allowing instructors to use more class time for student engagement in actual language practices. However, there has been little investigation of the effects of this communicative, flipped classroom model on students' learning processes and outcomes. This mixed methods action research study revealed that the introduction of varied collaborative language learning activities had a positive impact on students' self-efficacy and engagement as well as provides implications that will be of value to language educators interested in enhancing their use of the communicative, flipped classroom model.

## **DEDICATION**

I would like to dedicate this dissertation to my parents, brother, and in memory of

Elena Castro Gerpe.

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## **Chapter 1**

### **Leadership Context and Purpose of the Action**

“Knowledge emerges only through invention and re-invention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other,” (Freire, 1968/1972, p. 72).

Many institutions of higher education throughout the United States have a language requirement for almost all students, who represent a variety of different interests, majors, and goals. In the state of Michigan, the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor is one of these institutions. Through my many informal conversations with students in the Department of Romance Languages over the span of 14 years, it has become apparent that not all students are advocates of or feel confident in meeting this language requirement. Similarly, in the classroom, some students appear highly engaged, but others seem uninterested and rarely participate. The problem of practice addressed in this study is the varied levels of student engagement and language self-efficacy in the required language courses at the university. Lower levels of student engagement and language self-efficacy can negatively affect students’ academic performance and ability to successfully meet their language requirement, as well as detract from their overall enjoyment of the course and desire to continue learning the language. Furthermore, this study finds itself at a unique moment, where the long-standing communicative approach to language learning meets the flipped classroom, creating opportunities for learning activities to be negotiated in a collaborative way. This study will explore how collaborative learning in a flipped classroom context might be used to enhance the engagement and language self-efficacy of all students in a required language course.

Human beings are social creatures, and learning has always been social as well. People learn in different ways with and from each other. Collaborative learning refers specifically to occasions when people learn together; that is, all participants are learners (Banerjee 2012). Collaborative learning has been documented in historical records and in cultures around the world, in formal as well as informal educational settings. In Western cultures, collaborative learning in the formal educational context was expanded by the work of British teachers and researchers in the 1950s and 1960s described by Bruffee (1984). Collaborative learning (CL) refers to an instructional method in which students at various performance levels work together in small groups toward a common goal as suggested by Gokhale (1995). CL has been used in a variety of contexts, including K-12 and higher education settings worldwide. CL is often intertwined with cooperative learning, although they are separate concepts. “Collaboration is a philosophy of interaction and personal lifestyle where individuals are responsible for their actions, including learning and respect the abilities and contributions of their peers; cooperation is a structure of interaction designed to facilitate the accomplishment of a specific end product or goal through people working together in groups,” (Panitz, 1999, p. 3). CL has gained a significant amount of momentum in higher education in the United States since the 1990s.

Collaborative *language* learning is also not a new technique, stemming from sociocultural theory originated by Vygotsky (1978). In the introduction of Vygotsky’s book entitled *Mind in Society*, Michael Cole and Sylvia Scribner highlight the following about his work in relation to language learning:

In stressing the social origins of language and thinking, Vygotsky was following the lead of influential French sociologists, but to our knowledge he was the first modern psychologist to suggest the mechanisms by which culture becomes a part of each person's nature. (Cole, Scribner, & Souberman, 1978, p. 6)

Collaborative language learning is based on this school of thought and is an approach that has been employed in a variety of ways in higher education in the United States and is gaining momentum in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan. In our department, the communicative language teaching approach is well-established and as we transition into more of a flipped classroom model, in which students prepare at home with vocabulary and grammar instruction online and then come to class ready to practice what they have studied ahead of time. Swain (2000) suggested that language learning occurs in collaborative dialogue, which prior research focused on input or output had missed:

...tasks which encourage students to reflect on language form while still being oriented to meaning making—that is, tasks which engage students in collaborative dialogue of the sort illustrated in this chapter—might be particularly useful for learning strategic processes as well as grammatical aspects of the language. (Swain, 2000, p. 122).

By flipping our language learning classrooms, we can potentially use class time in more innovative ways, maximizing the use of collaborative dialogue and collaborative learning to enhance the flipped language classroom. It is through this collaborative language learning that student engagement and self-efficacy in the target language was examined.

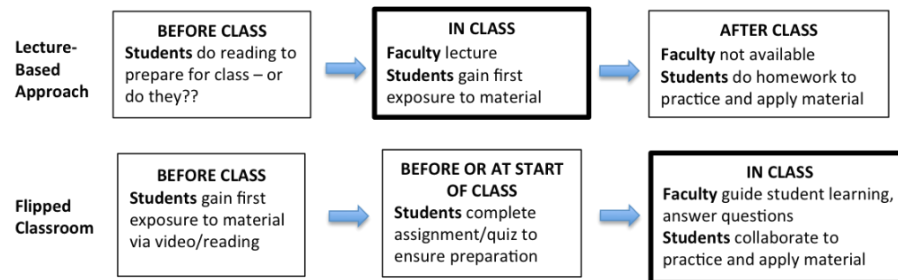
The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how collaborative language learning activities affected student perceptions of their engagement and self-efficacy. My assumption was that the incorporation of collaborative language learning activities would increase student engagement and language self-efficacy in the communicative flipped language learning context.

### **Larger Context**

The flipped classroom, which emerged from the K-12 setting has had many variations over the years and can be applied to many different educational contexts. The flipped classroom emerged from theories of blended learning, referring to the thoughtful integration of classroom face-to-face learning experiences with online learning experiences according to Garrison & Kanuka (2004). There are many uses of technology in higher education and the flipped classroom is one of them. “It is becoming evident that even though universities and workplaces perceive efficiencies in the flipped classroom at a time of increasing cost-cutting measures, academics also see this as an opportunity for curriculum renewal and developing a more student-centered approach” (O’Flaherty & Phillips, 2015, p.94). Although the flipped classroom is a relatively recent development in many higher education contexts, allowing for more interaction during class time and potentially for an increased level of student engagement and self-efficacy, it has existed for many years. For the purposes of this dissertation, in a flipped classroom, the information transmission component of a traditional face-to-face lecture is moved out of class time and in its place are active, collaborative tasks (Abeysekera & Dawson 2015). Students prepare for class with resources that cover what would have

been in a traditional lecture and after class they review and consolidate their knowledge. The following figure illustrates the difference between the flipped classroom and the lecture-based system in higher education, according to the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan (<http://www.crlt.umich.edu/flipping-your-class>).

**Figure 1: Adapted from the website of the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching**



According to the Chronicle of Higher Education’s 2015 Guide to the Flipped Classroom, the University of Michigan’s Math Department has been flipping their classes since the mid-1990s (Berrett 2012). “In 2008, Michigan gave concept inventories to students before they started calculus and after they finished and calculated the difference relative to the maximum gain they could have made. Students in Michigan’s flipped courses showed gains at about twice the rate of those in traditional lectures at other institutions who took the same inventories” (Berrett, 2012, p. 1). It is also noted that the students at The University of Michigan who performed less favorably in flipped classrooms, showed the same gain as those who demonstrated the largest increase in understanding from traditional lectures elsewhere. This particular example is extremely relevant since this action research study will take place at the same institution.

However, there has been a lot of criticism of the flipped classroom as well. Straumsheim (2013) stated that not only do the students have a tendency to complain that they are not able to work on homework on their own time, but also professors tend to complain that there is a significant amount of more work involved in flipping a classroom. Another criticism by Straumsheim (2013) is that higher education lecturers think that the flipped classroom may reduce a need for them and therefore poses a threat to their job security. Despite the criticism and the various points of view about flipped classrooms, Straumsheim concluded that more colleges and universities are growing comfortable with the idea of recording lectures and making them available online and that this will continue to be the case provided that costs are kept low.

Talbert (2014) discusses the four “pillars” of practice associated with a flipped classroom approach, conveniently chosen to form FLIP as an acronym:

- Flexible environment (Students are allowed a variety of modes of learning and means of assessment)
- Learning culture (Student-centered communities of inquiry rather than instructor-centered lecture)
- Intentional content (Basically this means placing content in the most appropriate context – direct instruction prior to class for individual use, video that’s accessible to all students, etc.),
- Professional educator (Being a reflective, accessible instructor who collaborates with other educators and takes responsibility for perfecting one’s craft) (Talbert, 2014, p. 2)

There is the flexibility then to apply concepts from the flipped classroom method to many educational contexts across higher education, to the level to which each individual instructor is comfortable.

## **The Flipped Classroom and Language Learning**

The incorporation of the flipped classroom is an important development in the world of language learning, which is linked to other facets of learning such as student engagement, self-efficacy in the target language, and collaborative learning. Flipping the classroom has the potential of making language learning a more meaningful experience and simultaneously could be personalized to be made relevant to issues that are of interest to the students. The time in class can be utilized even more efficiently for speaking and listening. In order to incorporate this method into language learning in a more meaningful way, it is imperative to understand how language learning is perceived by our students and to ensure that the language learning experience is more than a list of words to learn or a requirement to fulfill. Vivian Cook describes this need in the context of communicative language teaching:

Communicative teaching methods require the students to talk to each other because they see L2 learning as growing out of the give-and-take of communication. For the most part, teaching methods have developed these ideas of learning independently from SLA research. They are not based, for example, on research into how learners use grammatical explanations or how they learn by talking to each other. More information about how learners actually learn helps the teacher to make any method more effective and can put the teacher's hunches on a firmer basis. (Cook, 2016, p. 20)

Hung (2017) argued that it is difficult to theorize the construct of flipped language classrooms, because it is fairly new. Hung (2017) found that the transformation of



learning and teaching desired by the incorporation of the flipped classroom required not only active learners, but also educators who strive to improve their expertise. Hung (2017) concluded that there are many contextual factors involved in flipping a language classroom such as content delivery, learning activities, learner characteristics, and teacher knowledge. Flipping a language classroom is a unique experience depending on the group of students, the course design, and the individual differences an instructor may bring to the table. Chuang, Weng, & Chen (2018) noted that language learners with a high level of motivation followed quiz mechanisms closely and therefore benefitted most from the flipped classroom. Lee & Wallace (2017) discussed outcomes and perceptions of flipped learning in an EFL classroom. According to Lee & Wallace (2017) the process of flipping the classroom and conducting the study was overwhelming at times, however, ended up being a rewarding experience. This study found that students in the flipped classroom earned higher average scores on their final exam and surveys indicated that most students seemed to enjoy learning English in the flipped environment. Lee & Wallace (2017) noted several factors that are essential for effectively implementing flipped learning, such as sufficient time, the quality of online tutorials, and the accessibility of these tutorials. In addition to the students' favorable perception of the flipped language learning environment, there was also a statistically significant increase in achievement displayed in this study. Kim (2017) explored students' reflections with flipped learning in a university, specifically examining relationships among learning styles, personality traits and satisfaction from flipped learning classes. This study showed that although students had mixed feelings toward the flipped learning, generally the flipped learning model was acceptable, and many students recognized the advantages

of flipped learning. Kim (2017) emphasized that although any learning model is ideal if learners are motivated and talented, the flipped learning model highly depends on learners' motivation and initiative for its success. Kim (2017) also stressed the importance of the relationship between the pre-class and in-class activities as well as the personalization of instruction. These considerations briefly summarize the overall rationale for the flipped language classroom and the types of issues that it could have potentially presented in this action research study.

### **Local Context**

The Department of Romance Languages and Literatures (RLL) of the University of Michigan was the setting of this action research study. The elementary language program within our department offers classes in Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese, and Catalán that fulfill the university language requirement of four consecutive semesters of language study, as opposed to the higher-level courses that correspond to the major and/or minor requirements. RLL also offers doctorate degrees in Spanish, French, and Italian. By 1981, RLL had 69 minors/majors. By 1989, Spanish alone had 69 minors and by the end of the 1990s, the total number of minors/majors in RLL had risen over 115%. Currently RLL has 104 professors and lecturers, not including graduate student instructors, and offers approximately 350 undergraduate classes each academic year.

RLL has been facing challenges in terms of how and to what extent online components will be integrated into our elementary language program and how flipping our classrooms will work with our existing framework of the communicative approach, which entails using mainly the target language in the classroom in a communicative way

that makes language learning meaningful. I have been a lecturer in our department for 14 years and the 2017-2018 academic year is the first year when all the courses in our undergraduate language program used textbooks with online components, facilitating the flipped classroom method, since grammar activities are completed at home in preparation for class. The now communicative flipped classroom has the potential to address the problem of how to better utilize class time, by encouraging students to be more involved and accountable in their language learning journey as they will need to be more of an active participant in the language learning experience, as opposed to potentially not being engaged or feeling confident during their language learning experience.

### **Problem of Practice**

My personal interest in this specific problem of practice stems from my background of learning Spanish as a foreign language in a more traditional, lecture-based way than the way in which I am now teaching. As I incorporate collaborative language learning, I would like to explore students' perceptions of these collaborative learning activities, addressing specifically student engagement and self-efficacy in the target language. These constructs are important for this action research study because they are closely related to students' emotions about the target language, the class, each other, and their own language learning process. I have long been interested in students' perceptions. I administered a survey in the spring of 2010 to obtain student perceptions of Spanish 232, our fourth-semester content-based course that fulfills the language requirement. I am now interested in the preceding course, Spanish 231, our third-semester skills-based course that serves as a bridge between our first-year courses and the last class of the

language requirement. I have taught all levels of the language requirement courses and have found Spanish 231 to be a good point to check in with students about their struggles and successes. Personally, I believe that learning more about our students' experiences allows me to have more empathy for their personal language learning journey and to adjust my instruction accordingly. For example, in part based on my earlier survey results, I was able to personalize a Spanish 232 topics course I created about art and photography. It is with this background that I am now interested in inquiring into student perceptions of collaborative learning in the flipped, communicative language classroom in my department.

The problem of practice addressed in this study is the varied levels of student engagement and language self-efficacy in the required language courses at the university. Lower levels of student engagement and language self-efficacy can negatively affect students' academic performance and ability to successfully meet their language requirement, as well as detract from their overall enjoyment of the course and desire to continue learning the language. The context of this action research study was the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan. I was interested in learning more about student perceptions of collaborative language learning in the communicative, flipped language classroom in our department, since all elementary language program courses have been recently enhanced with online components.

## **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how collaborative language learning activities affected student perceptions of their engagement and language self-efficacy. My assumption was that the incorporation of collaborative language learning activities would increase student engagement and language self-efficacy in the communicative flipped language learning context. This study is important, because even though collaborative learning, the communicative approach, and the flipped classroom to some degree, have been used for years, the online platform accompanying our textbooks that allows students to prepare for classes ahead of time, requiring students to arrive to class prepared to engage and practice, is more of a recent development. It also allowed us, the instructor and the students, to reflect upon student engagement and self-efficacy in the target language.

I previously had not had the opportunity to be able to reflect about this transition and how it would evolve in the future. This action research study led to this broader reflection. Frequently we, as language instructors, get caught up in what we are trying to achieve and forget to reflect about the students' perspective. This mixed methods study was an opportunity for gathering insight about how collaborative learning in our department is perceived, by students, and how and to what extent these perceptions could better inform ways in which to maximize student engagement and language self-efficacy in the target language.

## **Innovation**

For my innovation, I developed and implemented a collaborative learning approach to our communicative flipped language classroom, as a way of using our class time in the most effective way. I will describe how this innovation began and what it consisted of.

The idea for this innovation began during my Cycle 0 research. I interviewed a student who had completed her language requirement through our department. It became apparent from this interview that the classroom interactions with the other students and as well as with the instructor were amongst the most meaningful and memorable aspects of the course to this student. Such interactions are also consistent with the communicative language learning method that informs the department's approach to language education.

This innovation, carried out during my Cycle 1 research, consisted of a series of collaborative projects, such as student-created vocabulary videos, that served as an interactive way for students to collaborate in language learning and use classroom time to maximize speaking and listening. The idea was to create opportunities during each of the five chapters of the textbook in which students are able to work together collaboratively. There were collaborative ice-breaker activities at the beginning of the semester, which led to creation of our class contract that we developed together as a class. Other collaborative activities included group grammar activities and speaking workshops. This innovation was carried out in a section of Spanish 231, a third semester, intermediate Spanish course in our department.

This course was specifically chosen, because it pertains to the second year of the language requirement, which makes the flipped classroom more feasible. It is also not

the last class of the requirement, which alleviated some stress about the class being a graduation requirement on the part of the students as well as the instructor. The following research questions guided this action research study.

### **Research Questions**

This study was conducted to answer the following research questions:

- RQ 1: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect student engagement?
- RQ 2: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect language self-efficacy in the target language?
- RQ 3: What are student perceptions of collaborative language learning activities in a communicative flipped language classroom approach?

The communicative flipped language classroom in our department is the result of many years of using the communicative approach in our language classes, and now incorporates the transition of these classes into a new era where all the textbooks for our undergraduate language requirement include an online component, preparing students with grammar activities before they come to class ready to practice. The communicative flipped language classroom therefore can be enhanced by using collaborative learning activities to efficiently use class time and increase engagement and self-efficacy among language learning students. Furthermore, the addition of collaborative language learning

activities in the communicative flipped language classroom has the potential of students creating a new relationship with the target language and increasing their overall motivation and enjoyment of the course, even though it is often a language requirement.

### **Organization of the Dissertation**

The following chapters will provide a descriptive analysis of a mixed methods action research study that was designed to better understand student perceptions of collaborative learning in the communicative, flipped language classroom and how these perceptions may better inform our department practices with respect to the communicative flipped classroom moving forward. In Chapter 2, I will discuss theoretical perspectives that guided this study, including a review of literature that supports the study. In Chapter 3, I will explain the methodology that was used in this mixed methods action research study, including information about the setting, participants, innovation, instruments, data sources, and the data analysis used in this study. Chapter 4 will highlight findings from the data collected for this study and Chapter 5 will discuss connections between the quantitative and qualitative data, outcomes in relation to the theoretical perspectives, lessons learned, implications of the study, and a conclusion.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Theoretical Perspectives and Research Guiding the Project**

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the larger and local contexts, as well as the purpose of this study. I included a description of my work setting and of the need for a study about the communicative flipped classroom and collaborative language learning in our department. The problem of practice described in Chapter 1 is to increase student engagement and language self-efficacy in our current communicative, flipped language classrooms. My intervention consisted of maximizing the opportunities for collaborative learning activities as a means of promoting this increase.

In Chapter 2, I outlined the theoretical perspectives and research that framed this study. Most broadly my study is informed by sociocultural perspectives on language learning, which are the foundation for the communicative approach to language instruction. I discussed prior literature that offers a rationale for using collaborative learning in a flipped classroom model to better achieve the goals of a communicative approach. Lastly, I discussed the constructs of student engagement and self-efficacy, how they have been assessed, and implications for my study.

### **Theoretical Perspectives**

Sociocultural theory (SCT), which was originated by Vygotsky (1978), grew out of the observations of children and their relationship to communication in the context of play. Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" described the distance between the actual development level and the level of potential development with adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers, which provides a way of understanding a child's

cognitive capacity. This idea by Vygotsky was expanded by Lantolf (2000) in the context of language learning and is the first theory that will inform my study. SCT argues that human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process and language use, organization, and structure are the primary means of mediation. Language, then, is a tool of this mediation, negotiated by the instructor, students, and the parameters of the language learning experience inside and outside of the classroom. “[Language] teaching must become much more flexible than it currently is. It must break from the notion of ready-made lessons that are rigidly adhered to in favor of improvisation. This does not mean an ‘anything goes’ approach, since teaching in the ZPD (zone of proximal development) means developing a sensitivity to students’ current abilities and their potential development.” (Lantolf, 2000, p. 25). Lantolf (2000) called for this flexibility in response to Van Lier (2000) who argued that learners, with the support of their instructors and other learners, must take responsibility for their own participatory activities. For example, in the language learning context students are responsible for preparing outside of the classroom as well as participating actively inside of the classroom. This accountability is an important facet of the successful collaborative learning in the communicative, flipped language learning context.

Student accountability as well as the relationship between students’ self-perceptions as language learners and their level of investment into their language learning is an important consideration for this study. This study will take place within a department where there this is an active language requirement in place. Almost all students are required to take 4 consecutive semesters of a language or any variation of that based on their language placement exam. Therefore, a student’s level of

commitment is not always apparent beyond the need to fulfill the language requirement. One of the driving motivations of this study then was to find out more about how students perceive the use of collaborative learning activities in the newly implemented flipped language classroom in our department, as well as how they change, if at all, as language learners during the semester. Our flipped language classroom is communicative, because it employs strategies that form the communicative language teaching approach that is prevalent in our department.

### **Communicative Language Teaching**

Communicative language teaching (CLT), or the communicative approach, is an approach to language teaching that emphasizes interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of study. CLT is also based on the sociocultural view of language learning. Language teaching with this method views competence in terms of social interaction and looks to further language acquisition research to account for its development (Savignon, 1991). The CLT approach is also the precursor to task-based learning, which is also commonly researched and employed in the foreign language classroom. This communicative method has been the long-standing approach in our department and continues to be the approach that we employ in our language classes.

The communicative approach has its roots in the movement of *communicative competence* in the 1970s. Hymes (1971), a U.S. anthropologist and sociolinguist, disagreed with Noam Chomsky's (1964) characterization of the linguistic competence of the ideal native speaker and proposed the term communicative competence to represent the use of language in social context, observing sociolinguistic norms. Hymes'

communicative competence may be seen as the equivalent of Halliday's (1978) meaning potential. Concurrently, in a research project at the University of Illinois, Savignon (1972) used the term communicative competence to refer to the ability of language learners to interact with other speakers, making meaning, as distinct from their ability to perform on tests of grammatical knowledge. CLT continues to be a dominant approach in language teaching in the United States. Many of the common communicative activities used within language classrooms across the country are based on theories by Krashen (1983) and by Van Patten (1993). This action research study explores how this communicative approach can be enhanced with collaborative learning activities within a flipped language classroom.

### **The Flipped Language Classroom**

As mentioned in Chapter 1, although the flipped classroom has existed for quite some time, its incorporation into our elementary language program is a rather recent development. It has just been since the fall of 2017 that all the courses in our elementary language program include an online component and that we are being asked to flip our classrooms in order to take full advantage of class time to carry out the communicative approach. These decisions have come to us with new textbooks, new ideas, and a renewed sense of what may be possible in the language learning classroom. I have reviewed the literature about the flipped classroom that is most relevant to language learning and to the constructs of this study, student engagement and language self-efficacy. It is imperative for this study to consider what is taking place currently in terms of the flipped language learning classroom.

The research related to the topic of flipped language learning has all alluded to an enhanced sense of student autonomy, competence, and comfort but studies have had different focuses and goals. Most relevant to my study, Zainuddin & Perera (2017) and Steen-Utheim & Foldnes (2018) explored student perspectives of the flipped classroom pedagogical model. Zainuddin & Perera (2017) concluded that students in the flipped classroom setting felt more competent with tasks and activities that motivated them to cultivate self-directed learning as compared with the conventional classroom. Steen-Utheim & Foldnes (2018) on the other hand pointed out that the affective dimension is especially stimulated in the flipped classroom, such as students' increased sense of commitment to their peers and their feelings of being safe and recognized. In addition to student engagement and positive affect, evaluating learning outcomes is also a consideration for the communicative, flipped language classroom.

DeLozier & Rhodes (2017) argued that the value of activities in the flipped classroom reflect the particular cognitive processes engaged by the activity, regardless of whether the setting is a traditional classroom or a flipped classroom. DeLozier & Rhodes (2017) indicated that one of the difficulties of evaluating the learning outcomes of the flipped classrooms is linked to the great variation of instructor implementation of the flipped classroom. DeLozier & Rhoades (2017) concluded that further research about flipped classrooms is necessary, especially in terms of the effectiveness of individual practices, students' shift in approach and preparation, and student's overall level of engagement. The current action research study responds to this call for further research by investigating collaborative language learning as a specific way of increasing student

engagement and language self-efficacy in the communicative, flipped language classroom.

### **Collaborative Learning**

More generally, the rationale for the use of collaborative learning originated from three different theoretical frameworks: cognitive development theory, social interdependence theory and social learning theory. Cognitive development theory grew out of the research of Piaget (1995) and Vygotsky (1978). Although Piaget's work centered more on children, Vygotsky's ideas about social interaction and learning have been widely applied to language learning. Collaborative learning in language learning involves students working together to complete a task or to create an assignment and is aligned with sociocultural theory and the communicative approach. Van Lier (2000) stresses the notion of students' accountability and active participation as important in collaborative learning, which aligns with the broader goals of the communicative, flipped classroom.

Oxford (1997) described collaborative learning as having a social constructivist philosophical base, which views the construction of knowledge with a social context framework. Oxford (1997) argued that collaborative learning, along with cooperative learning (highly structured goals and techniques for learning) and interaction (a broader facet of communication) are the three communicative components in the language learning classroom.

Storch (2007) found collaborative learning to generally provide more language practice opportunities, improve the quality of student's talk, create a positive learning

climate, promote social interaction, and allow for critical thinking as opposed to a less collaborative learning environment. The current study concentrated on how collaborative learning activities create a positive learning climate and promote social interaction. How students participate in the creation of a positive learning environment and interact socially with one another can affect their perceptions of the collaborative learning activities and of the course in general. Ideally, student engagement and language self-efficacy will increase as a result of the positive learning climate and social interaction, inside and outside of the classroom, due to the incorporation of more collaborative learning activities.

### **Student Engagement**

According to Kuh (2009), engagement allows students to develop habits that increase their capacity for continuous learning and personal development. Language learning students tend to have varying levels of engagement throughout any given semester, due to a variety of factors. In our department specifically, there is a language requirement, with the result that not all students are choosing to study language yet must do so to graduate. They do choose the language, based on a variety of different reasons, such as a personal connection to the language or the perception that one language is easier to learn than another language. There are also different categories of engagement.

Law, Chung, Leung & Wong (2017) discussed engagement within the categories of behavioral engagement, cognitive engagement, and motivational engagement. Behavioral engagement refers to a student's level of effort, persistence, and participation in the classroom. Cognitive engagement is more about the quality of the student's

engagement for learning as opposed to the quantity of their engagement. Motivational engagement is then the level of motivation or drive on the student's part towards engaging in the learning process. A subcategory of motivational engagement then is emotional engagement, which in the past has not been as clearly defined in educational research as behavioral and cognitive engagement. Emotional engagement refers to the way in which a student feels towards the language learning material and the language learning environment. Law, Chung, Leung & Wong (2017) concluded that collaborative learning activities may enhance all facets of student engagement in learning. The current study is mostly concerned with motivational engagement, specifically, emotional engagement. Language learning students must self-motivate to some degree and tend to motivate one another in the process. I would argue here that collaborative learning activities broaden the opportunity for this type of emotional engagement in a social context.

Carini, Kuh & Klein (2006) suggested that the lowest-ability students benefit more from increases in engagement than other classmates. Although this may be a difficult aspect to measure, I would argue for promoting engagement inclusively within the language learning classroom so that all students have the potential of benefitting from engagement. Language learning contexts lend themselves well to providing a space for growth for any student, regardless of their level. Different levels within any given language classroom can present a unique set of challenges for the students and the instructor. However, collaborative learning activities could provide an opportunity for increased student engagement, which would lead to more favorable perceptions of the course as well as possible increased sense of achievement. A student's sense of language



self-efficacy can play a major role in how he/she approaches goals, tasks, and challenges and is another important part of this study.

### **Self-efficacy**

Self-efficacy has been widely theorized and studied (Bandura 1993, Raoofi, Tan & Chan 2012, Oxford 2018). Researchers have hypothesized that self-efficacy can be specific to particular tasks and situations and in education self-efficacy can be specific to content areas (Bandura 1977, Mills, Pajares & Herron 2007, Ardasheva, Wang, Adesope & Valentine 2017). For the current study the topic of interest is language self-efficacy. Language self-efficacy refers to the how confident a student feels in their ability to read, write, speak, and understand a language. In the context of the current study, language self-efficacy is analyzed in terms of learning Spanish at the university level, specifically in terms of the skills that are most relevant to collaborative learning, speaking and understanding.

Bandura (1993) discussed how self-efficacy plays an important role in how students approach tasks and in the possible outcomes of these approaches.

A strong sense of efficacy enhances personal accomplishment in many ways. People with high efficacy approach difficult task as challenges to be mastered rather than as threats to be avoided. Such an efficacious outlook fosters interest and deep engrossment in activities. They set themselves challenging goals and maintain strong commitment to them. (Bandura, 1993, p. 144)

How language students approach specific tasks and the class in general has a monumental impact on their levels of engagement. Self-efficacy can vary from student to student. Mills, Pajares & Herron (2007) found that the development of self-regulatory skills in the language classroom is associated with students' value, interest, and respect for the target language and culture. Raoofi, Tan & Chan (2012) concluded that although learning styles and self-efficacy in second language learning have been investigated separately, there is a general lack of research about the relationship between learning styles and self-efficacy in language learning. Ardasheva, Wang, Adesope & Valentine (2017) suggested a need for a greater emphasis on awareness-raising and on self-regulated and metacognition as underlying mechanisms of the effectiveness of strategy instruction, any intervention that focuses on strategies to be regularly adopted by language learners to develop their proficiency and/ or improve their performance. Therefore, self-efficacy could also potentially be more of a possibility in a collaborative, inclusive communicative, flipped language classroom where engagement is a goal. Bandura (1993) addressed several factors affecting self-efficacy such as age and depression. He also noted that students who doubt their intellectual efficacy are likely to gravitate to peers who do not subscribe to academic values and lifestyles.

The instructional goals then for the instructor of a communicative, flipped class would be to promote high levels of engagement and of self-efficacy from the beginning of the semester. This could take many different forms. For example, providing students with opportunities to reflect about their language learning experiences and get to know their classmates in the process from the very beginning of the semester would allow them to create a sense of solidarity and group commitment that will serve as a foundation for

the classroom environment. In addition to this commitment, discussing the incorporation of collaborative activities into the communicative, flipped language classroom from the beginning of the semester could enhance the students' understanding of how the semester will take shape. Emotions within the language learning context are an important component of student engagement and self-efficacy.

Oxford (2018) noted that the self-regulation of emotions, linked to student engagement and self-efficacy, can lead to greater success in language learning. Kahu & Nelson (2018) expand on this notion of emotion by adding that self-efficacy is linked to a sense of belonging. The general idea is that if emotions are socially and linguistically created (social constructivism), language instructors may be able to help language learners develop social and linguistic techniques for dealing with negative emotions and enhancing positive emotions. By starting the semester off with an opportunity for students to vent about their prior frustrations with language learning, a space is created to start a new relationship with the target language and therefore increase student engagement and language self-efficacy as language learners.

### **Summary of the Current Study**

There is a need for a closer look into a communicative, flipped language classroom in order to learn more about student perceptions of student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative learning. Flipping a language classroom is an intentional and continuous process, approached differently by each individual instructor and each individual student. The process of creating a community within the classroom could be a way to align a flipped language classroom with the communicative approaches

that have proven to be successful in the past. Flipping the language learning classroom could lead to an increased level of student engagement, language self-efficacy, and an overall more collaborative language learning experience for our students. The current study focused on student engagement, language self-efficacy, and perceptions of collaborative learning in a third semester university Spanish course.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Method**

#### **Setting and Participants**

I conducted a mixed-methods, action research study of a Spanish 231—a third semester, intermediate, skills-based course in our department—during the Spring semester of 2018. I taught the class and there were 15 students in the class. This seven-week course took place during the Spring semester (May and June) of 2018. The study was designed for one section of a course in our elementary language program.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how collaborative language learning activities affected student perceptions of their engagement and language self-efficacy. My assumption was that the incorporation of collaborative language learning activities would increase student engagement and language self-efficacy in the communicative flipped language learning context. This intervention consisted of implementing collaborative learning activities, such as student-created photo and/or video presentations of vocabulary and/ or grammar for each chapter as a way of taking advantage of the flipped classroom model. The idea was to encourage students to be more active and accountable for their own language learning outside of the classroom in order to maximize their time in class to speak and practice their language skills more effectively.

I piloted this type of activity in the Winter of 2018 and then finalized the lesson planning for the study by the end of April 2018. I wanted to encourage students to create a new, personalized relationship with one another and with the Spanish language that

goes beyond the limitations of their foreign language requirement. This enhanced level of engagement was intended to allow students to view language learning more positively, to practice their skills, and to help them to envision the possibilities of using Spanish in their future.

## **Research Design**

This was a mixed methods action research study and the data were collected in the form of surveys, interviews, a midterm focus group, and student reflections. The data were collected in May and June of 2018. I administered a quantitative, Likert scale pre-survey at the beginning of the course to assess student engagement and self-efficacy, perceptions of the communicative approach and collaborative learning, and relevant demographic information. Approximately half way through the course, I interviewed 4 students to gather more in-depth perceptions of student engagement, language self-efficacy, and course activities. There was also be a midterm focus group administered by CRLT, the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan, which includes the entire class. A quantitative, Likert scale post-survey was also administered at the end of the course. Student reflections were written by all students towards the end of the course and were analyzed qualitatively. The pre-survey took place this first week of May. The interviews took place during the last week of May. The post-survey took place in the second week of June. Student reflections were also collected during the second week of June. Table 1 provides an overview of the schedule for data collection.

**Table 1: Timetable for Implementation**

<b>Timetable for Implementation</b>	<b>May 2018</b>	<b>June 2018</b>
<b>Week 1</b>	Pre-survey: May 4, 2018	
<b>Week 2</b>		
<b>Week 3</b>		
<b>Week 4</b>	Interviews: May 23, 2018	
<b>Week 5</b>	Midterm focus group by CRLT: May 29, 2018	
<b>Week 6</b>		Student Reflections: June 8, 2018
<b>Week 7</b>		Post-survey June 15, 2018
<b>Week 8 is final exam week: June 22, 2018</b>		

### **Participants**

The participants of this study ranged from students who are university freshman to seniors. They ranged in age from 17 to 40. There were a total of 15 participants, 12 females and 3 males. Some were taking their first language class at the university, having taken the language placement exam, or some had taken the previous course at the university during the previous academic year. Two participants had previously only studied high school Spanish and one participant had taken Spanish previously at another university. There were a range of proficiency levels within the class and the students were able to take the class either for a grade or for pass or fail credit. Most of the students have taken the previous prerequisite course, either Spanish 102 or Spanish 103, in the Winter semester and planned to take the following course, Spanish 232 in either the Summer or Fall semester. The interviewees were purposively chosen, based on their

performance on their first exam, in order to account for a range of proficiency levels.

The participants represented a range of different majors and interests, however, will have had the university language requirement in common. The students represented an array of different ages and backgrounds. They all had the LSA language requirement in common, which most of them started at the University of Michigan. The language requirement is a four-semester consecutive language sequence that is required for the majority of the students in LSA, the college of Literatures, Sciences, and Arts.

**Table 2: List of Participants**

<b>Participant</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Previous Spanish Experience</b>	<b>Year at UM</b>
1. Female	24	Transfer student from Schoolcraft College	Second year
2. Male	19	High school Spanish	First year
3. Female	20	Spanish 103 at UM	Second year
4. Female	40	Spanish 100 at UM	Fourth year
5. Female	18	Spanish 103 at UM	First year
6. Female	19	Spanish 100 at UM	Third year
7. Male	18	Spanish 103 at UM	Second year
8. Female	21	Spanish 102 at UM	Third year
9. Female	19	Spanish 102 at UM	Second year
10. Male	19	Spanish 103 at UM	Second year
11. Female	18	High school Spanish	First year
12. Female	19	Spanish 103 at UM	Second year
13. Female	19	Spanish 102 at UM	Second year
14. Female	20	Spanish 103 at UM	Second year
15. Female	19	Spanish 103 at UM	Second year

### **Innovation**

My innovation consisted of a series of collaborative learning activities in which students maximized their experience with the target language inside and outside of the



communicative collaborative flipped language classroom. These activities included ice-breaking activities at the beginning of the semester as well group projects throughout the semester. An example of these collaborative learning activities was a project in which different groups created vocabulary videos for each chapter throughout the semester and then presented them in class as a way of making the vocabulary more memorable and meaningful to themselves and to their classmates. These collaborative activities took place inside and outside of the classroom as a means of maximizing speaking in the classroom. In addition to the collaborative ice-breaker activities and the vocabulary videos, there were 4 other collaborative learning projects throughout the semester that incorporated different grammatical and communicative objectives: an imperfect childhood presentation, a photography contest presentation, a conversation workshop, and a museum activity. These 5 types of collaborative learning projects provided the framework for this innovation. The criteria for these collaborative learning activities are that students worked with one another in order to solve a problem, complete a task, or create a product.

The following table includes a list of collaborative activities I facilitated during the Spring semester.

**Table 3: List of Collaborative Activities**

<b>Week of the Spring Semester</b>	<b>Collaborative Learning Activities</b>
Week 1: 5/1-5/4	1. Collaborative ice breaker activities that will help to create our class contract
Week 2: 5/7-5/5/11	2. Vocabulary videos
Week 3: 5/14-5/18	Vocabulary videos 3. Imperfect tense childhood presentation
Week 4: 5/21-5/25	Vocabulary videos 4. Photography contest presentation
Week 5: 5/28-6/1	Vocabulary videos 5. Conversation workshop activity
Week 6: 6/4-6/8	Vocabulary videos
Week 7: 6/11-6/15	6. *Museum activity

\*The museum activity had to be cancelled due to the museum not being open during class time.

### **Instruments and Data Sources**

The questions posed in this action research study were the following:

RQ 1: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect student engagement?

RQ 2: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect language self-efficacy in the target language?

RQ 3: What are student perceptions of collaborative language learning activities in a communicative flipped language classroom approach?

These questions were addressed by a mixed methods style of inquiry.

**Quantitative data collection.** I created a pre- and post- survey instrument based on surveys from three different sources: Skinner, Kindermann & Furrer (2009), Spears (2012), and Torres & Turner (2016). All items were taken directly from these surveys, modified to pertain to my local context. The items relating to the construct of student engagement were taken from the Skinner, Kindermann & Furrer (2009) survey with very little modification. The five items relating to the construct of collaborative learning were taken from the Spears (2012) survey and were chosen from seven items, based on relevance to the current study. The items relating to the construct of language self-efficacy were taken from the Torres & Turner (2016) survey. One item from the Torres & Turner (2016) survey was also modified in wording from “speaking scenario” in an exam to a “listening situation”, since students in the local context of the current study are more familiar with that term. The term “foreign language” was also modified to “target language” to ensure inclusivity for students in our local context and to include heritage language learners. Also, the items for the self-efficacy portion of the survey instrument were chosen from statements pertaining to speaking and listening, since these are the two most relevant language skills focused on in this study in terms of their relationship to collaborative learning. This adapted survey was designed to take approximately 10 minutes. It was piloted with a Spanish 231 class on Friday, March 23, 2018 and took approximately 10 minutes. The statements were perceived to be clear, and the students were able to easily understand and complete the survey. The survey instrument can be found under Appendix A.

**Qualitative data collection.** I conducted four interviews during this 7-week semester. The interviewees were four of the students taking the Spanish 231 class. I

interviewed two students who seem to be doing well in the course and two students who seemed to be struggling more in the course. These determinations were based heavily on the students' performance on Exam 1. I limited the number of interviews to four students. The rationale for interviewing only four students, two students who feel at ease in the class and two students that are struggling in the class, was that they were in-depth semi-structured interviews and there were only 15 students in the class. These interviews were in-depth, semi-structured interviews that ranged from 17-32 minutes each. The interview protocol consisted of approximately 10 interview questions based on questions that were used for Cycle 0 research in conjunction with questions derived from the questionnaire administered at the beginning of the semester. These questions extended beyond the items of the quantitative survey to examine further student perceptions of their own engagement, language self-efficacy, as well as their attitudes towards the collaborative learning activities in the course. The interview protocol can be found in Appendix B.

### **Data Analysis**

This mixed methods action research study followed a triangulation mixed-methods design. Both quantitative and qualitative analyses were conducted somewhat simultaneously to ensure providing a more comprehensive view of student perceptions of the communicative collaborative approach and the flipped language classroom in our department.

The quantitative survey data provided information about any change that occurred during the intervention about the constructs observed, among the student participants in

the class. The qualitative data, however, offered a more in-depth look into these student perceptions and provided another level of understanding about how the collaborative communicative approach and the flipped language classroom feels from their perspective. This qualitative data to some degree was an extension of the participants' responses in the quantitative data.

**Quantitative data analysis.** I conducted a paired samples *t*-test to determine whether or not differences in student responses between the pre- and post- test surveys were statistically significant. I created one summative score for each scale and use those scores to compare pre- and post- test assessments. I performed reliability analysis by means of the Cronbach alpha test of each separate construct of the pre and post survey created for this innovation. In order to perform the paired samples *t*-test of the pre- and post-surveys and the reliability analyses, the latest version of SPSS was used.

**Qualitative data analysis.** The interviews were transcribed by a transcription service and verified by the researcher, as well as coded thematically. I used thematic analysis to reveal how students told their experience from their point of view, which was a relevant way to address the research questions of this study. I approached my data from the perspective of Charmaz (2014). "Codes emerge as you scrutinize your data and define meanings within it," (Charmaz, 2014, p. 114). I utilized the idea of thematic analysis as discussed by Saldaña (2015). I used open coding in a sequential manner. I began with coding the surveys, then the midterm student feedback, the interviews, and then the end of semester evaluation in Spanish. I first identified codes in a sequential manner across data sources and then looked for relationships among the codes (similar to Saldaña's pattern coding) to formulate themes and later assertions about this study.

Focusing on significant themes was a particularly appropriate means of understanding changes in student engagement and language self-efficacy, because students often attributed increased levels of motivation and confidence to certain people in their language learning environment, such as their instructor, their classmates, and even themselves. This collaboration is an essential part of a student's language learning experience and can allow us to better understand student engagement and language self-efficacy from a student's point of view. The following table shows the time frame, actions, and procedures for this action research study.

**Table 4: Action Research Plan Summary**

<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Procedures</b>
By March or April, concurrent with Cycle 1 research	Write and submit proposal for action research dissertation.	Create survey instruments and interview questions accordingly for upcoming study.
First week of May May 4, 2018	Conduct pre-test survey	Allocate part of class time to take this survey during the first week of Spanish 231.
Third week of May May 23, 2018	Interview students	Set up a time outside of class for four separate in-depth, semi-structured interviews that will range from 20-40 minutes each.
Fourth week of May May 29, 2018	Midterm focus group by CRLT	Use approximately 20 minutes of class time for a midterm conversation conducted by CRLT.
First week of June June 8, 2018	Collect student reflections	Ask students to reflect in their own words about the different aspects of the course. Also, have them write a reflection in Spanish as one of their journal entries.
Second week of June June 15, 2018	Conduct post-test survey	Allocate part of class time to take this survey towards the end of the semester of Spanish 231.

### **Researcher's Subjectivity and Positioning**

I, the researcher, am a lecturer within this Department of Romance Languages and therefore have the subjectivity with an insider perspective. However, I surveyed and interviewed students, who were taking my class. Therefore, my positioning was also that of an observer, reflecting on the experience of my students. I also believe in the sociocultural perspective on language learning. Language learning varies based on the interaction with other students and the instructor and the negotiation that occurs during this interaction.

### **Threats to Reliability and Validity**

I attempted to maintain reliability and validity in this study, by allowing the student to reflect upon their own experiences and clarifying points of this reflection along the way during the interviews. The interviews were relaxed, semi-structured conversations in which the student takes me on a journey through his/her language learning experience. The participants were reassured that, as explained on the first day of class, their responses on the survey or the interview in no way would affect their grade in the course.

**Testing and pretest sensitization.** There are various threats to reliability and validity in this action research study. One threat to reliability and validity of this study is testing and pretest sensitization or the “practice effect”. Testing and pretest sensitization is defined by Smith and Glass (1987) as a testing method commonly used in experimental studies, measuring the dependent variable before and after introducing the treatment to the participants. I maximized validity, by explaining to the participants the use of the

pre- test and post- test to ensure that the participants are clear about the process and encourage them to be sincere in their responses.

**Testing and pretest sensitization.** Another threat to validity is the Hawthorne Effect according to Smith and Glass (1987), which is a special case of demand characteristics related to the participants knowing they are part of a study. This could have impacted my study, because students could have included information that they thought their professor would like to hear as opposed to what they really think. For this reason, I included a mid-semester conversation performed by CRLT, the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan, to provide the students with an opportunity to provide additional feedback to a third party.

**Novelty Effect.** The novelty effect according to Smith and Glass (1987) is a difference in the dependent variable not caused by the proposed change, but rather the enthusiasm or high morale that sometimes accompanies new initiatives. This could have impacted my study, because there are currently not a lot of action research initiatives in our department. To reduce this threat, I minimized the time devoted to data collection, and otherwise treated the course and the students in a manner consistent with other courses. While the students knew that they were participating in a research project, I kept their attention focused on the course itself.

**Experimenter Effect.** The experimenter effect according to Smith and Glass (1987) is that the enthusiasm of the researcher for an innovation may motivate the participants to perform particularly well. This could have impacted my study, because it was difficult to hide enthusiasm and energy. I attempted to reduce this effect by maintaining a professional stance and maximized validity by trying to be as neutral as



possible in my demeanor. Students were also reminded often to view this opportunity as a moment of reflection and to be as sincere as possible with their responses.

### **Summary of the Innovation**

I conducted a mixed methods action research study about collaborative language learning in the communicative, flipped language classroom. This innovation took place during May and June of 2018 with a third semester, intermediate Spanish course, Spanish 231. Surveys, interviews, a focus group, and end of semester evaluation in Spanish examined student perceptions about student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative language learning activities.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Results and Findings**

I will provide a brief overview of the collaborative language learning intervention used in this study, that took place in May and June of 2018, during the Spring semester. The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how collaborative language learning activities affected student perceptions of their engagement and language self-efficacy. My assumption was that the incorporation of collaborative language learning activities would increase student engagement and language self-efficacy in the communicative flipped language learning context. I collected data from a Spanish 231, a third semester, intermediate course at the University of Michigan that I taught, in the form of surveys, interviews, and student feedback. There were 15 participants, 12 female undergraduate students and 3 male undergraduate students. This chapter will include the results and findings of the pre and post survey, as well as the interviews, the focus group, and student feedback by way of a journal entry. The research questions for this study were the following:

RQ 1: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect student engagement?

RQ 2: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect language self-efficacy in the target language?

RQ 3: What are student perceptions of collaborative language learning activities in a communicative flipped language classroom approach?

The three constructs analyzed in this study are then student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative learning. I discuss the quantitative findings related to each construct and research question, followed by the qualitative findings in the following sections.

### **Reliability Analysis of the Survey Instrument**

This study included a pre-survey and post-survey, administered at the beginning and end of the semester. I first conducted a reliability analysis of the pre-survey and post-survey data, by means of determining Cronbach's alpha in SPSS. I used SPSS, after completing the survey, to conduct a Cronbach alpha analysis for each construct and for the entire survey. "Another check on the internal consistency of an instrument is to calculate an alpha coefficient (frequently called Cronbach alpha after the man who developed it)." (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2005, p. 163). This survey instrument includes the constructs of student engagement, self-efficacy, and collaborative learning. The survey includes 15 items, with a 5-point Likert scale: 5=Strongly Agree, 4=Agree, 3=Neither or N/A, 2=Disagree, 1=Strongly Disagree, with an additional open-ended question at the end.

The analysis of the pre-survey reveals a range of statistics per construct from  $\alpha = .494$  to  $\alpha = .798$ . The Cronbach alpha for all items together is  $\alpha = .799$ . The analysis of the post-survey is similar in terms of a range of statistics, but are higher, and reveal a

range per construct between  $\alpha = .599$  to  $\alpha = .902$ . The Cronbach alpha for all items together in the post survey is  $\alpha = .895$ .

**Table 5: Pre-survey**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Coefficient Alpha Estimate of Reliability</b>
Student engagement	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	.798
Self-efficacy	6, 7, 8, 9, 10	.494
Collaborative Learning	11, 12, 13, 14, 15	.723

**Table 6: Post-survey**

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Item</b>	<b>Coefficient Alpha Estimate of Reliability</b>
Student engagement	1, 2, 3, 4, 5	.828
Self-efficacy	6, 7, 8, 9, 10	.599
Collaborative Learning	11, 12, 13, 14, 15	.902

As shown above, the statistic calculated for collaborative learning is  $\alpha = .723$  in the pre-survey and  $\alpha = .902$  in the post-survey. Typically, an internal consistency of .70 or higher is considered acceptable. However, the construct of self-efficacy had a lower Cronbach alpha coefficient, so I performed more analyses, including an inter-item correlation matrix, which I have included below.

**Table 7: Inter-Item Correlation Matrix for Self-Efficacy in the Pre-Survey**

	<b>Statement 6</b>	<b>Statement 7</b>	<b>Statement 8</b>	<b>Statement 9</b>	<b>Statement 10</b>
<b>Statement 6</b>	1.000	.085	-.378	-.170	-.291
<b>Statement 7</b>	.085	1.000	.345	.399	.468
<b>Statement 8</b>	-.378	.345	1.000	.508	.508
<b>Statement 9</b>	-.170	.399	.508	1.000	.545
<b>Statement 10</b>	-.291	.468	.508	.545	1.000

**Table 8: Item total statistics for Self-Efficacy in the Pre-Survey**

	<b>Scale Mean if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Scale Variance if Item Deleted</b>	<b>Corrected Item-total Correlation</b>	<b>Squared Multiple Correlation</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted</b>
<b>Statement 6</b>	15.07	3.781	-.227	.241	.766
<b>Statement 7</b>	15.40	2.257	.556	.325	.242
<b>Statement 8</b>	14.93	2.924	.371	.409	.404
<b>Statement 9</b>	15.40	2.114	.493	.386	.258
<b>Statement 10</b>	15.20	2.314	.458	.453	.302

It is evident that statement 6 of the pre-survey is inconsistent. The correlations of this statement with other items are very weak, and it has an inverse relationship with several items. Cronbach's alpha is much better (.766) if the item was removed. Statement 6 reads as follows: "I am able to understand the instructor's spoken directions for an activity in my UM language class." The students had a variety of responses ranging from 2 (Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). It is not possible to determine a standard reason for this variation, other than these participants were in contact with several different instructors for their previous course. Despite the low coefficient alpha, the item was retained for the analyses.

## **Quantitative Results**

**Student engagement.** Student engagement can be classified in many ways. Motivational engagement is the level of motivation or drive on the student's part towards engaging in the learning process. A subcategory of motivational engagement then is emotional engagement, which in the past has not been as clearly defined in educational research as behavioral and cognitive engagement. Emotional engagement refers to the

way in which a student feels towards the language learning material and the language learning environment. My first research question was “How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect student engagement?” Student engagement in this study refers to the level of motivational and emotional engagement the students feel with the material, the class in general, as well as with their classmates. Student engagement was studied quantitatively and qualitatively.

I will first give an overview of the quantitative findings of student engagement. A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare the scores on student engagement from the beginning of the semester with the end of the semester. I first calculated a mean score for each construct of the study, for both the pre- and post-survey. The mean score for student engagement for the pre-survey was 3.81 (SD = 0.54) and for the post-survey, it was 4.03 (SD = 0.59), with a 0.21 change in mean score. I conducted a paired samples *t*-test for each construct. The results of the paired samples *t*-test for student engagement was  $t(14) = 1.39, p = 0.185$ . There was not a significant increase in the student engagement mean score. The qualitative data provides more insight into potential changes in student engagement as the semester progressed.

**Language self-efficacy.** Language self-efficacy refers to the how confident a student feels in their ability to read, write, speak, and understand a language. In the context of the current study, language self-efficacy is analyzed in terms of learning Spanish at the university level, specifically in terms of the skills that are most relevant to collaborative learning, speaking and understanding. My second research question was, “How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities

into a communicative flipped language classroom affect language self-efficacy in the target language?”. A paired-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to compare the scores for language self-efficacy from the beginning of the semester with the end of the semester. The mean score for the pre-survey was 3.80 (SD = 0.38) and for the post-survey was 4.15 (SD = 0.37), with a 0.35 change in mean score. There was a significant increase in the mean scores for self-efficacy. The results of the paired samples  $t$ -test for self-efficacy were paired samples  $t(14) = 4.13, p = .001$ .

**Collaborative language learning.** Collaborative learning in language learning classrooms involves students working together to complete a task or to create an assignment and it is aligned with sociocultural theory and the communicative approach. My third research question was, “What are student perceptions of collaborative language learning activities in a communicative flipped language classroom approach?”. A paired-samples  $t$ -test was conducted to compare the scores for collaborative language learning from the beginning of the semester with the end of the semester. The mean score for the pre-survey was 3.86 (SD = 0.42) and for the post-survey was 3.97 (SD = 0.71), with a 0.10 point change in mean score. There was not a significant increase between the mean scores for collaborative language learning on the pre-survey and the post-survey. The results of the paired samples  $t$ -test for collaborative learning was  $t(14) = 0.654, p = 0.524$ . Even though there was no significant increase in the mean scores, the qualitative data for collaborative learning highlight other insights of the participants.

In summary, there may be a variety of reasons for the lack of increase in the mean scores for student engagement and for collaborative learning. For example, the majority of the students in this study, 12 out of 15 students, were coming from our program and

therefore already somewhat familiar with the communicative, flipped classroom. Also, in retrospect, the survey items corresponding to the language self-efficacy construct, which did have a significant increase in mean scores, were much more specific in terms of how they were worded and therefore may have more effectively captured the students' language learning experience.

## **Qualitative Results**

**Coding processes.** The overall coding approach for this study was inspired by Charmaz's 2014 approach. The coding processes for this study are derived from Saldaña (2015). I first used a process of open coding with all data sources, ultimately generating 42 open codes. As described in Chapter 3, I began coding with the pre-survey comment data and then used codes from this data as well as added others as I analyzed in this order: from the post-survey comments, midterm student feedback, interviews, and end of the semester evaluation in Spanish. Codes 1-17 were drawn from the comments from the pre-survey and codes 18-25 were drawn from the post-survey respectively. Codes 26-33 were added from the analysis of the midterm student feedback relating to student engagement and codes 34-42 were added from the analysis of midterm student feedback relating to collaborative learning respectively. The midterm student feedback data relating to language self-efficacy did not yield new codes. Analysis of the interviews and end of the semester evaluation in Spanish also did not yield new codes. Coding for the surveys and midterm student feedback was mainly descriptive and was conducted specifically using data relating to the research questions of this study. The interviews and end of the semester evaluations in Spanish were also coded using data relating to the



research questions of this study. Students also discussed topics not directly relevant to the research questions, and these comments were not used in the present analyses.

**Themes.** The four major themes that I derived from the codes from this study are: an overall enjoyment of the course, a moderate to high level of involvement in the course, a sense of an increased level of confidence, and a desire for more open conversation. One common theme that encompassed this study was an overall enjoyment of the course. Other broad themes that emerged and related specifically to the research questions of this study include moderate to high levels of involvement in the course (student engagement), increased confidence (language self-efficacy), and a desire for more conversation (collaborative learning). I would first like to highlight these themes with actual comments from the students. I will begin with comments from the pre-survey, specifically from students who did not previously study language at UM, to create a better sense of what the mindset of the students was at the beginning of the semester. These students experienced more of a true transition into the communicative, flipped language classroom for the first time.

The first set of qualitative data analyzed was the open-ended question from the pre-survey. The open-ended question at the end of the pre-survey is as follows: “Are there any final thoughts or comments you would like to add about your current language learning experience?”. The pre-survey referred back to their previous Spanish course. There were a variety of responses to this question on the pre-survey, depending on what the student felt was important. I will categorize these comments that were related to student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative learning in the communicative, flipped language classroom and focus on the post-survey, since that

related to the course in this study. These pre-survey comments serve to give context for this study. It is important to keep in mind that the pre-survey is referring to their previous language course, which for 12 of the participants was a UM language course, for 2 of the participants was a high school Spanish course, and for one participant was a course from another college. Participants 2 and 11 came from a previous high school Spanish course and Participant 1 came from another college.

The following qualitative findings correspond to the three students who had previously studied Spanish elsewhere. Participant 1 had studied in Schoolcraft College and Participants 2 and 11 had previously studied in high school. Participant 1 had previously taken Spanish at another college and commented the following: “I do feel behind at times, but I also feel like I’m catching up and think the resources provided to me may help tremendously. I plan to utilize them.” Participant 2 remarked: “While I liked my teacher for high school Spanish, I feel she didn’t prepare me for Spanish as much as I hoped she would, because she rarely spoke Spanish to our class and I feel slightly behind, in regards to listening skills/ speaking slightly. But...I am already feeling myself improve in Spanish with only a week of being taught in Rashmi’s learning environment. I love the class and feel like it is helping me a lot.” Participant 11 expressed the following: “My language learning experience has been difficult. I have struggled to learn the language and be enthused about it. My previous classes were very lecture heavy, which I feel did not work for me.” These comments help to highlight how students who were transitioning into the communicative, flipped classroom for the first time felt at the beginning of the course and to better understand the following themes.

## **Theme 1: Enjoyment of the Course.**

**Comments from the pre-survey.** The following data corresponded to the construct of student engagement and are from students that took their previous Spanish course in our program. The main positive comment about student engagement was the following comment from Participant 4: “It was a small class, so it was easier to get to know classmates and feel comfortable practicing Spanish.” There were also other comments about student engagement that were negative, such as the following comment from Participant 6: “LSA’s (the college of languages, sciences, and arts) language requirement sucks out the joy of learning new things. I can’t learn Spanish for fun at the same time as learning it for credit.” Participant 13 added about student engagement: “The dynamics of the groups greatly impacts the effectiveness for me.” There were a wide variety of comments and a noted shift by the middle of the semester.

**Midterm student feedback.** All the common themes that emerged from this study initially appeared as codes from the midterm student feedback, derived from a focus group, administered by a third party, CRLT, the Center for Research on Learning and Teaching at the University of Michigan. These codes relate back to many of the qualitative findings from this study across all sources of data. This midterm student feedback assessment was administered half-way through the semester on a day when 13 out of the total 15 students attended. This feedback was anonymous and therefore that data are not assigned to any certain participant. This feedback also generated codes that were common across all types of data and later formed the theme-related components and themes from this study. The following table displays comments from the midterm student feedback that exemplify these codes.

**Table 9: Codes and Comments from the Midterm Student Feedback**

<b>Codes</b>	<b>Comments from midterm student feedback</b>
1. Importance of class atmosphere	“Overall, I would say I’m moderately to highly involved in class. I participate frequently but not necessarily as much as I possibly could. The biggest factors in my involvement are derived from the atmosphere. If those around me are engaged, I am likely to match their level of engagement, but if not, it is more challenging to get myself actively engaged. Also the level of enthusiasm and welcoming approach from the instructor motive me to consistently participate.”
2. Enthusiasm of the instructor/ welcoming approach	
3. Moderate to high level of involvement	“I mostly feel involved in this Spanish 231 class. I think I am more involved in small group discussions rather than large class conversations. I think my confidence levels affect my contribution in class. I often do not contribute in large group discussions because I do not want to be wrong.”
4. Effects of small groups	
5. Increased confidence	“My confidence in my Spanish speaking skills has improved. I feel more comfortable speaking/listening to Spanish which I believe has a lot to do with Rashmi’s attitude/teaching. Confidence has definitely improved.”
6. Desire for more conversation	“Last week for the first time, we had like 15 minutes to openly talk in Spanish w/our partner (in prompts provided) I really liked that. I want to do more of that. I feel like I got to know my partner really well and talking/working collaboratively has become easier/more beneficial since then.”

These codes dominated all of the different types of qualitative data collected: open-ended questions on the survey, interviews, midterm student feedback, and the last journal assignment, which was an end of semester course evaluation in Spanish.

**Comments from the post survey.** An overall enjoyment of the course was also evident in the post-survey. The following statement is from Participant 2 (also interviewee 2). “I don’t think I would like to add much beside the fact that I have greatly enjoyed learning and improving my Spanish through this class type. I feel the way it’s

structured is beneficial for me, because we can have fun/ relax, yet I take it a lot more seriously than my high school Spanish. Rashmi Rama has done a tremendous job with the class. She is great!” Participant 2 is attributing is enjoyment and improvement to the structure of the class and to the instructor. Participant 15 shared a similar opinion for this theme. “I enjoy the class a lot. Rashmi made the learning environment fun and interesting.” Even though the overall sense of the students seems to be an enjoyment of the course, there was also obstacles to student engagement mentioned. The following statement from Participant 12 is an example. “It was fine. I didn’t enjoy the emphasis on speaking, but I get it to a point. I still think there should be some type of alternative.” In addition to an overall enjoyment of the course, there was specific praise for the collaborative language learning approach.

## **Theme 2: Moderate to High Level of Involvement.**

**Comments from the pre-survey.** The participants also commented freely about the communicative, flipped language classroom. Participant 3 commented: “I support the idea of a flipped classroom, because I think students get the most out of class if they come prepared to apply new language concepts.” Participant 4 was also a proponent of the flipped classroom: “I don’t feel I would do very well if all the learning took place in the classroom though.” Participant 12 suggested the following based on their previous class experience: “The flipped classroom needs to be supplemented with something in class, because while I do think this helps with speaking, I don’t know how much I retained vocabulary or reviewed grammar, because my instructor never really went over

these things.” These comments create a foundation for the feedback from the end of the semester evaluation in Spanish that follows.

**End of semester course evaluation in Spanish.** The prompt of the last journal assignment, an end of the semester course evaluation in Spanish read as follows: “Describe tus interacciones con tus compañeros. ¿Te gustó trabajar en grupos? ¿Qué actividades te gustaron más? ¿Qué actividades te gustaron menos? ¿Qué le recomiendas a un/a nuevo/a estudiante de español 231? ¿Si pudieras cambiar algo de español 231 para el futuro, qué sería? ¿Hay algo más que quieres comentar sobre la clase?” This translates to: “Describe your interactions with your classmates. Did you like working in groups? What activities did you like the most? What activities did you like the least? What do you recommend to a new Spanish 231 student? If you were able to change something about Spanish 231 for the future, what would it be?” The end of the semester course evaluations in Spanish were coded specifically for data relating to the research questions of this study.

Student engagement was discussed in the end of the semester student evaluations in Spanish by means of specifying which activities they liked the most in Spanish 231. The following table displays a list of the most well-received activities from the course. All grammatical and spelling errors have been maintained in the comments to reflect exactly what the participants expressed.

**Table 10: Most Well-received Activities in Spanish 231**

<b>Most well-received activities</b>	<b>Specific comments relating to these activities</b>
1. Vocabulary videos	Participant 12: “Mi actividad favorita era las presentaciones, hicimos como el video de vocabulario o cuando hablamos sobre un foto en nuestra vida.”  (Translation: “My favorite activity were the presentations, we did like the vocabulary video or when we talked about a photo in our life.”)
2. The “Flash Cultura” videos	Participant 3: “También me gustaron los videos de Flash Cultura, porque me hicieron sentir seguro en mi comprensión auditivo, y cultura es muy importante para comprender el uso de la language.”  (Translation: “Also I liked the Flash Cultura videos, because they made me feel confident in my listening comprehension and culture is very important for understanding the use of the language.”)
3. Catch Phrase, the show and tell presentation, forming a circle and practicing a grammar point, and listening to songs	Participant 10: “Los actividades me gustaron mas fueron cuando nosotros fuimos en un círculo y usamos una pelota practicar el nuevo material o cuando nosotros presentamos fotos acerca nos.”  (Translation: “The activities I liked the most were when we were in a circle and we used the ball to practice the new material or when we presented photos about ourselves.”)

The vocabulary video activity was specifically designed for this course, whereas the Flash Cultura videos are an audiovisual component of the textbook, that allows students to see different parts of the Spanish-speaking world in an 8-minute video. The show and tell photo presentation, was an activity I developed in a previous special topics course about art and photography, that I adapted to Spanish 231. There were also tendencies for the least well-received activities as shown in the next table.

**Table 11: Least Well-received Activities in Spanish 231**

<b>Least well-received activities</b>	<b>Specific comments relating to these activities</b>
1. Supersite	Participant 11: “El supersitio es muy específico y como resultado mucho actividades son innecesariamente difícil.”  (Translation: “The Supersite is very specific and as a result many activities are unnecessarily difficult.”)
2. Mingling activities	Participant 1: “No me gustaba caminando alrededor la clase. Era muy difícil y no había mucho tiempo.”  (Translation: “I did not like walking around the classroom. It was very difficult and there was not a lot of time.”)
3. Journals	Participant 7: “Las actividades que me gustaron menos fueron los diarios. Para mí, fueron mucho más largos que tenía que ser. Fue difícil para escribir uno y medio páginas sobre un tema.”  (Translation: “The activities that I like the least were the journals. For me, they were much longer than they had to be. It was difficult to write a page and a half about a topic.”)

Many of these comments reflect personal preferences, but they also give us as instructors a better sense of what the students’ likes and dislikes are based on and how certain activities could be improved. It was gratifying to note that the vocabulary video activity was the best-received activity over the course of the semester, since it was specifically designed for this course in order to facilitate the collaborative learning approach. Only one participant, who enjoyed this activity, also complained that it had to be done outside of class. There were also references to language self-efficacy in the end of semester evaluations in Spanish.



### **Theme 3: Increased Confidence**

**Comments from the pre-survey.** The following comments related to the construct of language self-efficacy. Participant 3 noted the challenge involved with language self-efficacy: “Like any performative task, getting better at speaking a new language requires you to push yourself to speak it regularly.” Participant 5 recognized a shift in confidence: “In my last Spanish class I felt like I improved and gained more confidence in speaking Spanish, but the part of the language I tend to struggle most with is listening.” Participant 13 opened up about a lack of language self-efficacy: “I’m uncomfortable speaking Spanish, because I feel like my partners won’t understand me and I get nervous and have a hard time getting my message across in Spanish.” These comments from the beginning of the semester about their previous language course were expanded upon in the end of semester course evaluation in Spanish for this course.

**End of semester course evaluation in Spanish.** There were fewer references to language self-efficacy in the end of semester evaluations in Spanish, but here are some general ideas that emerged. Participant 1 discussed how she did not like working in groups in the beginning of the semester, because she felt nervous and uncomfortable. She later noticed that it became more productive and, in the end, she liked it. Participant 3 felt as though the class had an ideal environment for speaking and making mistakes and as a result now feels more comfortable and confident in her use of Spanish. Participant 5 noticed that in the beginning her classmates seemed shy, but less so at the end of the semester and they were speaking more. Participant 8 expressed, “En general, siento que mi español ha mejorado durante este semestre.” (Translation: “In general, I feel that my Spanish has improved durante this semester.”) These comments are in line with the

results of the midterm feedback and show a sense of increased confidence. There was also a theme about collaborative learning that was derived from the comments of the post-survey and from the end of the semester course evaluations in Spanish.

#### **Theme 4: Desire for More Open Conversation.**

**Comments from the pre-survey.** The qualitative findings continue with the open-ended question from the pre-survey, referring the students' previous course, coded specifically for the construct of collaborative learning. Participant 7 remarked: "It is very helpful to work in small groups during the class. It is a low stress situation that especially helps with speaking." Participant 10 felt similarly: "Also, I feel like collaborative learning is most effective due to it not stressing kids out, helps with speaking Spanish, is fun, and causes for the class to become closer." These general comments about speaking openly in a low stress environment are supported by the post-survey and the end of semester course evaluation in Spanish.

#### **Comments from the post-survey: benefits of collaborative learning.**

Participants tended to praise the benefits of the collaborative language learning approach, but often added a suggestion or critique in addition to their praise. Participant 8's following statement is an example. "While collaborative learning/speaking is beneficial, the bar for participating is set quite high." Participant 3 shared the idea that collaborative language learning is beneficial, with a different suggestion. "Using the communicative approach really helped me gain confidence in my speaking abilities this semester, especially given the numbers of hours per week we spent in class, usually working in groups. My one criticism is that, for me, I could have used a little less review and more

focus on new material (i.e. future, conditional, past subjunctive).” Participant 11 also supported the collaborative language learning approach. “I really enjoyed the collaboration aspect of the class. Working with other students helped me learn faster and made me feel better when I didn’t know something.” There was a consensus that collaborative language learning in a communicative, flipped context was enjoyable and effective, yet was often communicated with a recommendation.

**End of semester course evaluation in Spanish.** All the students in this Spanish 231 course, except for one, expressed enjoyment for working in groups and for the collaborative learning approach. The one student who did not appreciate the level of collaborative learning in this course was participant 12, because she is shy and reserved and wished there had been other ways in which she could be shown her participation. Participant 12 did enjoy the presentations, one which was an individual presentation and the other a group presentation. While these are important considerations, learning a language in isolation does not align with the communicative approach our department has in place. As an instructor, I was content that she had made an effort, improved her Spanish, and enjoyed at least some of the activities in the course. The 14 out of 15 students who did enjoy working in groups, referenced a comfortable class environment and a preference for smaller groups. I will now describe the interview data that corresponded to four of the participants.

### **Interview Data**

The idea of student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative learning appeared in all four interviews conducted. Two interviews were conducted with

the highest scoring students on Exam 1, who were in the A range, and two interviews with the lowest scoring students on Exam 1, who were in the low B- range. In the following sections, I provide brief descriptions of findings from each interview, with the goal of illustrating similarities as well as differences in students' perceptions of student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative learning.

**Interviewee 1.** Interviewee 1 (participant 6, who previously studied Spanish 100 at UM) earned an A on exam 1. She associated her moderate student engagement levels with working with the same people and an appreciation for the Supersite, an online component to the textbook that students use at home in order to prepare for class. Interviewee 1 made a connection between her confidence level and her student engagement. She also felt like the more confident she felt the more engaged she was. She put her confidence level at a 6 on a scale of 1 to 10 at the halfway point of the semester, when the interviews were conducted. Interviewee 1 felt as though the collaborative learning approach allowed her to ask for help more easily than in the past. "We've definitely had to collaborate more than I've experienced in past classes. I definitely think that collaborative learning has helped me be comfortable with asking for help, which I could not say about myself in the past." She also had an overall positive experience in the course and earned an A as her final grade.

**Interviewee 2.** The second interviewee (participant 2, who previously studied high school Spanish) earned a B- on Exam 1. He credited his high levels of student engagement to the challenge of the course and the reality of the course being at the college level and therefore the responsibility of the student. He commented on the increased confidence as a result of getting his point across and feeling understood by the

instructor and his classmates. Interviewee 2 put his confidence level at a 6 on the 1 to 10 scale. He also had a positive response about his current experience with collaborative learning stating that he enjoyed that the majority of the class was dedicated to actual communication. “I feel pretty comfortable speaking in front of people in English, you know, like presenting things, but when you have to do it in Spanish, that’s one of the coolest things too.” Interviewee 2 had a very positive experience in the course and earned a B as his final grade.

**Interviewee 3.** Interviewee 3 (participant 3, who previously studied Spanish 103 at UM), earned an A on Exam 1. She associated her high levels of student engagement more with knowledge that everyone in the class is in the same situation and the ability to find topics of conversation that everyone in the class can connect with. She also connected the concepts of student engagement and language self-efficacy by expressing the idea of pushing oneself to be engaged in order to gain more confidence. Interviewee 3 also put her confidence level at either a 6 or a 7 on the 1 to 10 scale. She also had a favorable reaction to the collaborative learning approach expressing that it had made her more of an active listener and allowed her to challenge herself more. “I think it’s generally been a pretty positive thing. I liked that we spend most of the time in the class with actual communication and applying things, because obviously you’re not going to do that outside of the classroom.” Interviewee 3 had an overall positive experience and earned an A as her final grade.

**Interviewee 4.** Interviewee 4 (participant 14, who previously studied Spanish 103 at UM) earned a B- on Exam 1. She similarly attributed her moderate levels of student engagement to moments when she felt more on the spot and in a position where

she had to perform as well as the teaching style of the instructor, which was also noted by interviewee 2. Interviewee 4 associated her level of language self-efficacy to feeling comfortable in the class and surrounded by people who are easy to talk to. She also put her confidence level at the middle of the semester at a 6 on the 1 to 10 scale. Interviewee 4 also approved of the collaborative learning approach by highlighting her preference for smaller groups and how for her that facilitated a more comfortable environment. “I think it’s been going well. In this class, I was just telling my parents, I’ve really been enjoying the different activities, even like the projects, you know, making more of real classroom experience, like normal classes that have project and you have to meet outside of class.” She had a very positive experience in this course, earned a C+ as her final grade, yet is now taking Spanish 277 beyond the language requirement and planning to study abroad and minor in Spanish.

**All interviewees.** All interviewees dropped their confidence level by one number when asked specifically about their confidence level with speaking instead of just understanding. Both the students who appear to be doing well in the course as well as students seemingly struggling in the course had similar levels of confidence at the middle of the semester. It was evident that interviewees 1 and 3, participants who were doing well in the course had more constructive criticism for the course, while interviewees 2 and 4, who were struggling in the course more tended to have more of a positive view of the course. This could have been due to the Hawthorne effect, described in Chapter 3.

## **Themes and Assertions**

I will now discuss assertions that have been formulated based on the previously mentioned themes that I derived from the codes from this study. The four major themes that I derived from the codes from this study are: an overall enjoyment of the course, a moderate to high level of involvement in the course, a sense of an increased level of confidence, and a desire for more open conversation. These themes were derived from the most frequent codes that appeared across all types of qualitative data in this study: the pre-survey comments, the midterm student feedback, the interviews, the end of semester course evaluation in Spanish, and the post-survey. The assertions derived in this chapter will be later expanded upon in chapter 5. Each qualitative data source is represented and has theme-related components based on the codes from the midterm student feedback (Table 9). The following table will display these themes and assertions.

**Table 12: Themes and Assertions**

<b>Theme-related components (based on earlier codes)</b>	<b>Themes</b>	<b>Assertions</b>
Importance of class atmosphere Enthusiasm of the instructor/ Welcoming approach	1. Enjoyment of the course	Language learning with a focus on collaborative learning creates an environment in which students feel comfortable communicating and making mistakes.
Effects of small groups	2. Moderate to high level of involvement	Students are more likely to invest in a language learning experience that they enjoy and feel comfortable in.
Class atmosphere Instructor encouragement	3. Increased confidence	Feeling comfortable and understood allows students to take more risks, challenge themselves, and improve beyond what they thought may have been possible.
Collaborative language learning	4. Desire for more conversation	An increased level of confidence serves as a new level of motivation to want to further improve and progress with the language.

Table 12 suggests a progression model of relationship among the broader themes that have been derived from this study. There are several factors that can be attributed to a successful and productive language learning experience, yet they do not stand alone. They are interwoven into the student's overall language learning experience and are made up of a variety of components, three of which are student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative learning. These components work together. For example, making students more aware of collaborative language learning opportunities they have available to them may inspire them to invest more into their level of engagement, which in turn increases their confidence to the point of not only progressing beyond their



previous limits, but also developing an overall enjoyment for the class, the language, and the associations the language has in the world.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of how collaborative language learning activities affected student perceptions of their engagement and language self-efficacy. My assumption was that the incorporation of collaborative language learning activities would increase student engagement and language self-efficacy in the communicative flipped language learning context. Storch (2007) was discussed in Chapter 2 as finding collaborative learning to generally provide more language practice opportunities, improve the quality of student's talk, create a positive learning climate, promote social interaction, and allow for critical thinking as opposed to a less collaborative learning environment. The current study concentrated on how collaborative learning activities create a positive learning climate and promote social interaction. This chapter will connect quantitative and qualitative data through triangulation and answer the following research questions:

RQ 1: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect student engagement?

RQ 2: How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect language self-efficacy in the target language?

RQ 3: What are student perceptions of collaborative language learning activities in a communicative flipped language classroom approach?

This chapter will also include a discussion of the results in relation to the extant literature and to the theoretical frameworks, a discussion of lessons learned, limitations, implications for practice and research, as well as a conclusion.

### **Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Data**

This mixed methods collaborative language learning study employs a convergent design that involves simultaneously collecting both quantitative and qualitative data, merging the data, comparing the results, and explaining any discrepancies (Creswell 2015). The qualitative data are gathered to help explain or elaborate on the quantitative results. The data were collected over the span of seven weeks, which added to the convergent nature of the study.

Despite the rather limited changes in the quantitative data, results from the quantitative and qualitative data sets demonstrate complementarity. They point to the same conclusions and allow for more enhanced interpretation that provide greater confidence in the inferences made from this study (Greene, 2007). Data from this mixed methods, collaborative language learning study included surveys, interviews, midterm student feedback, and end of semester student evaluations in the target language. The qualitative data extended the results and findings of the quantitative data. The quantitative data alone did not display an overall substantial increase. Nevertheless, the qualitative data allowed me to delve deeper into student perceptions of student engagement, language self-efficacy, and collaborative language learning.

There were four assertions that were derived from the themes that emerged from the data that were specified in Chapter 4, which are: (a) language learning with a focus on

collaborative learning creates an environment in which students feel comfortable communicating and making mistakes, (b) students are more likely to invest in a language learning experience that they enjoy and in which they feel comfortable, (c) feeling comfortable and understood allows students to take more risks, challenge themselves, and improve beyond what they thought may have been possible, and (d) an increased level of confidence serves as a new level of motivation to want to further improve and progress with the language. The first and fourth assertions relate to the third research question, whereas assertions 2 and 3 relate to research questions 1 and 2 respectively.

### **Research Question 1**

How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect student engagement? Results from the qualitative data indicate, intentionally increasing the collaborative language learning opportunities in this course had a positive impact on the level of student engagement in this course. Many of the collaborative language learning activities that were purposefully included in this course, as well as other activities executed in a collaborative way, allowed students to feel personally invested in the course and to have a higher level of involvement in the course. The quantitative survey data did not reveal a significant increase in student engagement. However, the qualitative data, especially the midterm student feedback, extended these results to reveal that most of the participants reported feeling moderately to highly involved in the course at the halfway point of the semester. Students felt an increased sense of responsibility to the course and to their classmates with the collaborative language learning activities that were group projects,

such as the vocabulary video. One student reported in the midterm feedback that his/her level of involvement depended, because he/she did not feel as involved in the whole class activities. However, he/she did feel involved in the partner or group work. This was the opinion of one student and could be a personal preference. However, it is also an important point that a student can feel lost in a whole class activity, even though it is a smaller class size.

Based on the data related to this research question, Assertion 2 on student engagement emerged as a summary that captured students' responses and feelings in this area. Specifically, Assertion 2 was: Students are more likely to invest in a language learning experience that they enjoy and in which they feel comfortable. The very first days of class are an important moment of time in which the comfort level of the class atmosphere is established. The collaborative ice breaking activities (introduced by coordinators in our department, which I expanded upon and designed specifically for this study) at the beginning of the course were incorporated as a way of allowing students to bond from day one over similar goals, preferences, and language learning frustrations. This type of bonding not only allows students to feel understood and as though their classmates are in similar situations, but also lays the foundation for setting new language learning goals and an opportunity to view their language learning in a new way. Occasionally a change in mindset can also positively affect a student's level of involvement and therefore his/her student engagement. It is imperative that this shift occurs during this very beginning of the semester, even more so in a condensed semester during the Spring or Summer, as in the case of this study. There is then a certain level of personal self-motivation that is necessary for student engagement to improve or increase.

As instructors, we can only affect the way in which we present this idea to our students and the way in which we establish the guidelines and the expectations for the class environment. The students then have the responsibility of investing in the course to their level of comfort, which not only affects their level of student engagement, but also their level of language self-efficacy.

## **Research Question 2**

How and to what extent does incorporating collaborative language learning activities into a communicative flipped language classroom affect language self-efficacy in the target language? The incorporation of collaborative language learning activities augmented the level of self-efficacy for the participants in this course. The quantitative data did reveal an increase in levels of self-efficacy, but the qualitative data offered a more in-depth look at details that may affect this component of the study. The collaborative learning activity that more than likely had the most impact of the participants' level of perceived language self-efficacy was the photo show and tell activity. This activity was mentioned several times throughout the data, as a moment when the students felt confident about their Spanish abilities and remarked that it was a good challenge for them personally as well as for the course. This activity (developed for a previous topics course about art and photography) required students to in pairs, individually present a photo to the class and allow their classmates to ask questions. The student went up in front of the class in pairs, so that they did not have the pressure of being in front of the class alone. However, they individually presented their photo. Not only did the participants usually choose a photo of something or someone that was quite

important to them, they also paid close attention to detail with their short presentation. They knew the expectation was not to memorize their entire presentation and that their instructor would help them with vocabulary if necessary, so it was a low-risk opportunity to present themselves to the class in a fun and unique way. The presentation was for participation, not for a grade, which also allowed language learning anxiety levels to be low.

Based on the data related to this research question, Assertion 3 on language self-efficacy emerged as a summary that captured students' responses and feelings in this area. Specifically, Assertion 3 was: Feeling comfortable and understood allows students to take more risks, challenge themselves, and improve beyond what they thought may have been possible. It is not new information that how confident a student feels can affect their performance in a language learning course. However, the basis for this confidence may be underlying feelings of feeling comfortable and understood, not necessarily if the student is a confident person in general. Feeling comfortable and understood could be a factor in any university class and has an entirely new level in another language. Some participants in this study made specific mention of how the class environment lent itself well to making mistakes in a comfortable way. Making mistakes is an uncomfortable situation in any scenario, or any type of class. The fact that participants felt comfortable making mistakes speaks highly of the classroom environment that everyone worked hard to create from day one. The participants attributed their increased level of confidence to a variety of factors such as the classroom environment, the instructor, the classmates, and their previous course. The same self-motivation mentioned as a component of student engagement could also be linked to

student perceptions of language self-efficacy. A more self-motivated participant could simply be more aware of their language self-efficacy and of their progress as the course progresses. It is important to also note the possible link between student engagement and language self-efficacy. It is possible that the more involved a student becomes in the course, the more confident they seem to be, but this would require future research. Collaborative language learning activities seem to facilitate this process according to data from this study.

### **Research Question 3**

What are student perceptions of collaborative language learning activities in a communicative flipped language classroom approach? Overall, there was a very favorable reaction to the collaborative language learning activities by the participants. There was not a significant increase in terms of the quantitative data, yet the qualitative data yielded a strong approval of the collaborative language learning approach. In addition to the specific collaborative language learning activities specifically integrated into this course, the entire course was facilitated in a collaborative way. For example, there was always time at the beginning of the class to freely speak with classmates and ask questions about the current material. Homework was often reviewed in groups, allowing students to negotiate answers and meanings, before a whole class follow up. This allowed students time to attempt to communicate meaning and be understood, before participating in a whole group setting. The specific collaborative language learning activity designed for this course and this study, was the vocabulary video activity. This activity was designed in a way that participants were able to work in



groups at different times during the semester, organized by chapter. There were five chapters studied in this course, with different sets of vocabulary. At the beginning of the semester the activity was explained and an example from the previous semester was provided. Each group received their vocabulary video assignment at the beginning of the chapter and presented their video as we reviewed the chapter. The idea was to create a video with certain phrases or expressions that the participants wanted to highlight with the grammar from the chapter in a creative, memorable way. For example, the final vocabulary video of the semester was created by a group that decided to create a music video about the environment using hypothetical “if” clauses. All the vocabulary videos were incredibly creative and technologically impressive. These vocabulary videos made studying vocabulary a fun challenge instead of something the participants did not look forward to. Also, since Spanish 231 is the first second-year course, there is still a need to reinforce the study of vocabulary, instead of simply assuming, that the students understand the importance of this basic part of language learning.

Based on the data related to this research questions, Assertions 1 and 4 on collaborative language learning emerged as summaries that captured students’ responses and feelings in this area. Specifically, two assertions related to collaborative language learning are: Assertion 1: Language learning with a focus on collaborative learning creates an environment in which students feel comfortable communicating and making mistakes, and Assertion 4: An increased level of confidence serves as a new level of motivation to want to further improve and progress with the language. Feeling comfortable communicating and making mistakes was previously mentioned and depends on many factors, such as personalities, groups dynamics, and the classroom environment.

Collaborative language learning is a philosophy and an opportunity to make any activity more interactive and to intentionally create and incorporate activities that promote and strengthen the relationships among the students to the point where they feel comfortable sharing and doing so in another language. There are, of course, individual components of language learning that require students to study and to prepare at home. However, the classroom is a social environment in which students develop social skills in another language, before actually using the language while studying aboard or out in the world after graduation. Part of the shift in mindset discussed previously also includes accepting the possibility of using this other language in the future for either personal or professional reasons. Once this shift in mindset occurs, students cross over to assertion #4. Increased levels of confidence allow students to create a new level of self-motivation that sets in motion a new intention as well. This new intention is an elevated goal of what is to come in terms of their language learning journey.

### **Findings Related to Theoretical Perspectives**

The findings of this study are in line with the theoretical perspectives described in Chapter 2. Sociocultural theory, originated by Vygotsky (1978) and expanded by Lantolf (2000) in the context of language learning, was supported by this study. SCT argues that human mental functioning is fundamentally a mediated process and language use, organization, and structure are the primary means of mediation. Language, then, is a tool of this mediation, negotiated by the instructor, students, and the parameters of the language learning experience inside and outside of the classroom. Collaborative language learning activities facilitated this mediated process, by enhancing the classroom

experience, fostering the negotiation of language learning, and efficiently using class time to not only use, practice, and learn the language, but also to create relationships that extend beyond the classroom and positively affect the language learning experience. Socializing and creating relationships in another language is a powerful and motivating aspect of incorporating collaborative language learning into the communicative, flipped language classroom.

Steen-Utheim & Foldnes (2018) studied the flipped classroom and pointed out that the affective dimension is especially stimulated in the flipped classroom, such as students' increased sense of commitment to their peers and their feelings of being safe and recognized. The incorporation of collaborative language learning activities into the communicative, flipped classroom takes the place of other more traditional activities, such as lengthy grammar explanations, and allow students to form relationships in this space. These relationships add a sense of security to the communicative, flipped classroom and also increase an overall sense of commitment, not only to their peers, but to themselves and to the process of language learning. These feelings of safety and being recognized also extend to feelings of being understood and appreciated for their efforts to learn another language and to form relationships all at the same time.

Law, Chung, Leung & Wong (2017) concluded that collaborative learning activities may enhance all facets of student engagement in learning. This study was particularly focused on motivational engagement, specifically emotional engagement. Learning another language is an emotional process. For many students, it is the first time they are purposefully pushing themselves out of their comfort zone in order to acquire another language, which can be daunting. For other students, it is a third language they

are learning so the possibilities of adding another avenue of communication to their lives is an emotional step. Learning a new language can also present opportunities of challenging one's world view and potentially seeing the world through a new perspective. All these factors combined add an intensity to language learning that is not always addressed. Collaborative language learning activities are a way in which students may increase their comfort levels, regulate their emotions about learning another language, and possibly even expand their worldview in the process.

### **Lessons Learned**

There are several lessons I learned from this study that will be important for future reference. For example, there were several varied responses from the participants who had not taken Spanish at the University of Michigan previously. These students tended to struggle more than their classmates, who had already experienced the communicative, flipped classroom. The students who were already familiar with the overall philosophy of the communicative, flipped classroom and its format for language learning were able to adjust more easily to the inclusion of collaborative activities, but these three students had to adjust to a much larger change in classroom approaches. However, what distinguished these students from one another was their determination, attitude, and mindset towards the class. Participant 1 seemed to struggle the most and also in turn had the least favorable perception of her progress. Participant 2 seemed to be the most optimistic of the three students and, also made the most dramatic improvement. Participant 11 was somewhere in the middle of these two levels of optimism and was also very open about her progress and appreciative of the class style. It is challenging to

acclimate to a new type of language course and be expected to do so within a 7-week time frame and be ready for the next course. These students may need extra help, more reminders about the communicative, flipped approach, and more overall encouragement.

As mentioned earlier, it is important for students to push past their previous, perceived limitations and strive for new territory along their language learning journey. However, another important lesson that I learned is that it is also important for instructors to remember that every course is an opportunity for a student to change their mindset about language learning and progress beyond what anyone thought is possible. For example, participant 14, who was also interviewee 4, discussed in detail how difficult language learning had been for her. Her attention deficit disorder made it very challenging for her to stay on task and focus on what we were doing at any given moment. She also had minimal progress in her previous Spanish course, which affected her confidence. I noted her progress in Spanish 231 and overall enjoyment of the course, and while gratified, did not think much beyond that. I happened to run into her in the hallway this past Fall 2018 semester waiting outside of her Spanish 232 class. I said hello and she greeted me bursting with energy about what a positive experience she had in Spanish 231 and how it has continued into Spanish 232 and now she has declared a minor in Spanish and is studying abroad next summer.

For as many successes as there were during Spanish 231 during the Spring semester of 2018, there were also suggestions for making it better. There were 3 participants that felt as though the class contribution criteria, which can be found in Appendix C, was not clear enough. These criteria were developed by the coordinator, not the instructor, so it was at times difficult to explain this detail. However, it did seem as

though it was not so much that the criteria were unclear, but that these participants expected to have earned a higher grade in this category. The class contribution criteria can always be improved, and this suggestion will be communicated to the coordinator. The expectation level for class contribution is high and it is not without great effort that it is possible to stay consistent and earn an A, especially during the condensed 7-week Spring semester. We are continuously attempting to discuss how class contribution grades are earned and it is an ongoing conversation that will continue in future cycles of research.

From this study, I also learned that self-reflection is an important part of an educator's journey. I have reflected upon my teaching at other moments during my career, yet not as systematically as I have done during this study. I received an enormous amount of insight into my teaching and as well as into my students' language learning journey. The value of self-reflection is an important, yet often overlooked, educational tool.

## **Limitations**

There are some limitations that I observed from this study. For example, it is well noted that the group of students from this study bonded particularly well and got along, which is not always the case. It is important to remember that the nature of the students and the dynamics of any class may change due to its composition. For example, there

were also only 3 male students and 3 students of a different ethnicity in this class, which are factors that could have been explored further in this study.

Another limitation of this study was the experimenter effect. The experimenter effect according to Smith and Glass (1987) is that the enthusiasm of the researcher for an innovation may motivate the participants to perform particularly well. This could have impacted my study, as mentioned in Chapter 3, because it was difficult to hide enthusiasm and energy. There is a certain level of this limitation that cannot be avoided due to the nature of action research.

The wording for different types of qualitative data and how they shaped the student responses was another limitation of this study. While designing this study, my main concern was to align all data questions with the research questions. However, there may be a way to vary the wording in a more intentional way in order to attain a wider array of responses. For example, in the midterm student feedback, the question relating to language self-efficacy contained the word “confidence” in the question. Therefore, the word “confidence” was repeated several times in the student responses. Regardless of this limitation, this study still yielded rich data. It simply may be a consideration for future cycles of research.

Another possible limitation of this study was the brevity of the study. This study was conducted during a Spring semester, which at this institution is a condensed 7-week semester. While that data provided a detailed, in depth look at Spanish 231 facilitated in a collaborative way, a regular 15-week semester may have allowed for more time to explain the study and collect the data without feeling rushed. Also, there would have been more time for participants to reflect in between the surveys, interviews, midterm

student feedback, and end of the semester feedback. However, the study still revealed rich data about Spanish 231 from a student perspective.

### **Implications for Practice**

The findings of this study may be applicable across languages to any of the requirement level courses, and courses beyond the language requirement, in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at the University of Michigan, and to almost any language course in general. There are also several implications for practice from this collaborative language learning study that can be categorized by the different levels of our department that they affect. For example, there are implications for practice at the instructor level, the coordinator level, and the departmental level. All implications for practice work together and can affect one another.

**The instructor level.** The instructor level is the most obvious level at which implications from this study will affect practice. Instructors, specifically language instructors, are invited to use the findings from this study to incorporate even more collaborative language learning opportunities in a communicative, flipped classroom. Flipping the communicative language classroom opens a space in which students may use their time inside and outside of the classroom in creative and unique ways. As a result of the findings from this study, I am even more of an advocate of attempting to collaboratively incorporate audiovisual materials into the communicative, flipped classroom. Students creating their own, unique audiovisual materials related to the class is an opportunity to engage in a meaningful, creative, and memorable way of using the



language they are learning not only during the language requirement, but also beyond the language requirement.

**The coordinator level.** The coordinator level is a less obvious level at which implications from this study will affect practice. However, language coordinators could potentially be inspired by this study to promote and to encourage their instructors to brainstorm ways in which collaborative language learning can be incorporated into the communicative, flipped classroom. Language coordinators could also experiment with increasing collaborative language learning activities themselves, as a way of guiding instructors through this process. Some of the best activities are developed in teams, so this could be yet another opportunity for collaborative language teaching, uniting cohorts of instructors teaching the same course, and fueling ideas for other courses as well.

**The departmental level.** The results of my study suggest that students may respond in a positive way to a greater use of collaborative learning activities in our current flipped classroom model. In the context of our department's efforts to encourage innovative and effective teaching, collaborative learning activities may be a topic worth including in future professional development opportunities. In my innovation, I experimented with just a few forms of collaborative learning, and a more collective and systematic approach to incorporating collaborative learning across courses, and across languages, may be even more beneficial.

### **Implications for Research**

The implications of this study for future research present a variety of different avenues of continuing the conversation about collaborative language learning in a

communicative, flipped context. The constructs of student engagement and self-efficacy could be studied separately in the future, even though there are many links that connect them. Motivational engagement, and more specifically, emotional engagement, could be the topic of a future study. For example, it would be interesting to delve into topics such as emotional engagement and heritage learners. Self-motivation is another topic that emerged from this study, that is worthy of future research and could be linked to student accountability. How self-motivation and student accountability fluctuate in the communicative, flipped context could be the topic of a future study. In the same way, self-efficacy could be broken down into smaller components, such as the lack of self-confidence, and refocused into its own study. Another previously mentioned avenue of research would be to look at the relationship between student engagement and language self-efficacy more closely. It would also be of interest to look further into more reasons for increased confidence and how this may play a role in increased language proficiency.

There are also implications of this study for future research in terms of types of collaborative learning activities. The incorporation of more audiovisual materials was previously mentioned. In addition to these types of materials, I am an advocate of more open conversation activities and more game-like activities, based on the findings of this study. More open conversation was a theme that emerged from the midterm feedback, mainly inspired by a collaborative language speaking activity that was incorporated into Spanish 231 for the purposes of this study. What the students do not know is that it is difficult at that requirement language level for instructors to find time for extended, open conversation activities due to the amount of material we are covering. However, it would be beneficial to develop new and innovative ways of covering this material during

extended, open conversation activities. This type of activity would further engage students as well as prepare them well for their speaking exams at the end of the semester. The implication of this study for future research about more game-like activities is derived from a comment in the midterm feedback of this study. This specific comment struck me, since there has been a lot of discussion of the inclusion of more game-like activities in language learning and is worthy of further research and experimentation. “As innovation occurs, taking advantage of each feature of a game or technology will enable transformational pedagogy that moves toward the creation of a comprehensive learning experience in which students are engaged and willing to learn,” (Sykes, 2018, p.222). As an instructor at the university level, I struggle with the balance between game-like activities and more, traditional, academic type activities. However, at the current time, when enrollment numbers for other languages in our department besides Spanish are a concern and technology is such a monumental part of our students’ lives, it would be extremely pertinent to contemplate ways in which collaborative language learning activities could take the form of game-like activities, especially at the language requirement level across all languages. These activities would not have to overtake the class entirely and could be used as a warm-up activity or even a transition between more traditional activities. These types of future collaborative language learning activities are also in line with SCT and the influence it has had on language pedagogy.

## **Conclusion**

Language learning is a personal journey that requires many important elements for students to be successful. For as much as scholarly research may perpetuate ideas

about the communicative approach and the flipped classroom, students still look to their instructor primarily and their classmates secondarily for support and understanding during this personal journey. The combination of the communicative approach and the flipped classroom is an opportunity to build an environment where this support and understanding are cultivated.

Creating an optimal language learning experience in a communicative, flipped context is not an exact science to which we can apply a certain formula. Each instructor has his/her own individual way of connecting to students and presenting the material. However, it is possible to attempt to incorporate more collaborative language learning activities in line with SCT as a way of easing students' language learning anxiety, motivating their involvement and confidence, and promoting their desire to continue learning the language as this study shows.

There has been little investigation of the effects of this communicative flipped classroom model on students' learning processes and outcomes. This mixed methods action research study revealed that the introduction of varied collaborative language learning activities had a positive impact on students' language self-efficacy and engagement as well as draws implications that will be of value to language educators interested in enhancing their use of the communicative flipped classroom model.

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APPENDIX A  
SURVEY INSTRUMENT

Student perceptions of student engagement, self-efficacy, and collaborative learning in a communicative, flipped language learning context Rashmi Rama has designed this 10-minute survey to understand better student perceptions of student engagement, self-efficacy, and collaborative learning in a communicative, flipped language learning context.

This survey of your experience in your current language course is being conducted for the purposes of informing instructors of the best ways to utilize these methods in the future. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

Your participation in this survey is voluntary and confidential. It is not linked at all to your grade in the course. Your instructors will not see the findings until after the final course grades have been submitted.

\*This survey is not linked to this course's online end-of-term evaluations, so please also complete these separately. \*

If you have any questions about the survey, please contact Rashmi Rama ([rashrama@umich.edu](mailto:rashrama@umich.edu)), Dr. Elisabeth Gee ([Elisabeth.Gee@asu.edu](mailto:Elisabeth.Gee@asu.edu)) or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

\*If you are 18 years old or older, please proceed with the survey below. If you have NOT reached your 18<sup>th</sup> birthday, please DO NOT continue with the survey.

The following definitions about the context of your language class are listed here to help you with this survey:

1. **The communicative approach** is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning in the target language.
2. **The flipped classroom** is an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom, preparing students to come to class ready to practice their language skills.
3. **Student engagement** refers to one's level of connection to the class, material, and classmates.
4. **Self-efficacy** is one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task.
5. **Collaborative learning** refers to working in group to do a task, complete an assignment, or create a product.

The following abbreviation will be used for the University of Michigan: **UM**.

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Age:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Year at UM:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Last Spanish class:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please rank the following statements according to your level of agreement.

### **Student engagement**

**Statement 1: When we work on something in my UM language class, I feel interested.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 2: My UM language class is fun.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 3: I enjoy learning new things in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 4: When I'm in my UM language class, I feel good.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 5: When we work on something in my UM language class, I get involved.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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### **Self-efficacy**

**Statement 6: I am able to understand the instructor's spoken directions for an activity in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 7: I am able to speak in the target language to other students during group work activities in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 8: I am able to participate in class discussions in the target language in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 9: I am able to conduct an oral presentation in the target language in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 10: I am able to pass an exam in which I must answer questions relating to a listening section in the target language in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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### **Collaborative learning**

**Statement 11: I feel part of a learning community in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 12: I actively exchange ideas in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 13: I am able to develop language skills through peer collaboration in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 14: Collaborative learning in my UM language class is effective.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Statement 15: Overall, I am satisfied with my collaborative learning experience in my UM language class.**

5 Strongly Agree	4 Agree	3 Neither Agree nor Disagree	2 Disagree	1 Strongly Disagree
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**Please answer the following open-ended question:**

**Are there any final thoughts or comments you would like to add about your current language learning experience?**

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Thank you for your participation.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Rashmi Rama ([rashrama@umich.edu](mailto:rashrama@umich.edu)) or Dr. Elisabeth Gee ([Elisabeth.Gee@asu.edu](mailto:Elisabeth.Gee@asu.edu)) or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance at (480) 965-6788.

## APPENDIX B

### INTERVIEW SCRIPT AND QUESTIONS PRE-INTERVIEW SCRIPT

Dear Student,

My name is Rashmi Rama and I am a doctoral student in the Mary Lou Fulton Teachers College (MLFTC) at Arizona State University (ASU). I am working under the direction of Dr. Elizabeth Gee, a faculty member in MLFTC. We are conducting a research study on collaborative learning in the communicative, flipped language classroom. The purpose of this interview is to better understand the current situation with respect to student perceptions of collaborative learning in the communicative, flipped language classroom. We are asking for your help, which will involve your participation in an interview concerning your knowledge and experiences with the communicative approach and the flipped classroom. We anticipate this interview to take 60 minutes total. I would like to audio record this interview. The interview will not be recorded without your permission. Please let me know if you do not want the interview to be recorded; you also can change your mind after the interview starts, just let me know.

Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to participate or withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty whatsoever. You must be 18 years of age or older to participate. The benefit to participation is the opportunity for you to reflect on and think more about effective ways for students to enhance their understanding of collaborative learning in the communicative, flipped language context. Thus, there is potential to enhance the experiences of our students. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation.

Some helpful definitions for this interview are the following:

1. **The communicative approach** is based on the idea that learning language successfully comes through having to communicate real meaning in the target language.
2. **The flipped classroom** is an instructional strategy and a type of blended learning that reverses the traditional learning environment by delivering instructional content, often online, outside of the classroom, preparing students to come to class ready to practice their language skills.
3. **Student engagement** refers to one's level of connection to the class, material, and classmates.
4. **Self-efficacy** is one's belief in one's ability to succeed in specific situations or accomplish a task.
5. **Collaborative learning** refers to working in group to do a task, complete an assignment, or create a product.

Your responses will be confidential. Results from this study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications but your name will not be used.

If you have any questions concerning the research study, please contact the researcher – Rashmi Rama at [rashrama@umich.edu](mailto:rashrama@umich.edu) or (269) 779-6588.

Please let me know if you wish to be part of the study and will let me audio record your responses by verbally indicating your consent.

Thank you, Rashmi Rama, Doctoral Student

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact Dr. Elizabeth Gee at [Elizabeth.Gee@asu.edu](mailto:Elizabeth.Gee@asu.edu) or the Chair of Human Subjects Institutional Review Board through the ASU Office of Research

### **Collaborative Learning**

- 1) Would you please describe what your experience has been so far with the collaborative learning activities in our communicative, flipped language classroom?
- 2) In your opinion, how have the collaborative learning activities in the communicative, flipped classroom affected your language learning experience?
- 3) What strategies, techniques, etc. have you found useful so far and/ or could be used in the future to foster the collaborative learning in a communicative, flipped context?

### **Student Engagement**

- 4) Would you please describe what your experience has been so far in terms of your level of engagement with these collaborative learning activities?
- 5) Would you please describe when you feel most engaged in Spanish class? When did you feel the least engaged in Spanish class?

### **Self-efficacy**

- 6) How would you describe your confidence in your ability to speak and understand Spanish?
- 7) How has your confidence been affected, positively or negatively, by class activities this semester? Would you provide some examples?

### **Conclusion**

- 8) What suggestions would you have for a new student at the University of Michigan that is not used to collaborative learning in a communicative, flipped context?
- 9) What suggestions or final thoughts do you have about collaborative aspects in your language learning?
- 10) Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?



## APPENDIX C

### DAILY CLASS CONTRIBUTION CRITERIA & CLASSROOM NORMS

### **The A student**

- is a positive model for other students
- raises the level of the other students in the class
- always comes to class prepared
- always participates actively in class
- takes initiative in class
- takes risks in learning/speaking
- elaborates answers beyond what's required
- always makes his/her best effort
- always speaks in Spanish
- never uses English during class
- goes above and beyond what's expected of him/her

### **The B student**

- almost always comes to class prepared
- almost always participates actively in class
- takes some risks in learning/speaking
- expresses him/herself with some difficulty
- almost always makes an effort
- almost always uses Spanish
- never uses English during class
- contributes positively in group and pair work

### **The C student**

- is sometimes unprepared for class
- participates more passively than actively in class
- takes few risks in learning/speaking
- has limited capacity to express him/herself
- makes some effort
- doesn't use Spanish consistently
- is not always engaged in the class

### **The D student and below**

- is frequently unprepared for class
- is not actively engaged in the class
- is a passive learner
- takes no risks in learning/speaking
- is disinterested in the class
- can be disruptive to other students or the instructor
- can be disrespectful to other students or the instructor
- demonstrates a negative attitude in class

### **Classroom norms**

- Do not use **electronic devices** (cell phones, computers, iPads, etc.) in class
- Turn **telephones** off before class
- Take bathroom breaks **before** and **after** class (except in case of emergency.)

## APPENDIX D

### THEMES WITH MOST PERTINENT DESCRIPTIVE AND PROCESS CODES

Theme	Descriptive code	Analytic Memos
<b>1. Enjoyment of the course</b>	<p>Enjoyment of current class/instructor</p> <p>Praise for the flipped classroom</p> <p>Enthusiasm of the instructor/ welcoming approach</p> <p>Instructor encouragement</p> <p>Class atmosphere</p>	<p>An overall approval of the current class was generated by the students realizing the benefits of the flipped classroom. They felt at ease with the instructor. They more specifically felt supported by the instructor and by their classmates. Feeling comfortable was a main factor of the successful class atmosphere.</p>
<b>2. Moderate to high levels of involvement</b>	<p>Small groups</p> <p>Small class</p> <p>Personal relevance of material</p> <p>Same partners</p> <p>Different partners</p> <p>More game-style activities</p>	<p>The students felt involved and as though they benefitted from small groups. The also felt a connection to the material. Some students preferred the same partners, while other students preferred different partners. There was an idea from one student that stood out to me about more game-style activities.</p>
<b>3. Increased confidence</b>	<p>Enjoyment of proficiency/success</p> <p>Increased confidence</p> <p>Feeling comfortable</p> <p>Self-motivation</p> <p>Instructor encouragement</p>	<p>The students attributed their sense of progress and feeling more confident to feeling at ease and motivating/challenging oneself. There was also a feeling of ease with the instructor and a feeling of being encouraged by the instructor.</p>
<b>4. Desire for more open conversation</b>	<p>Praise for the collaborative learning</p> <p>More open-ended conversation</p> <p>More preparation for oral exams</p>	<p>The students enjoyed working in groups and wanted to speak more openly in general as well as in order to prepare for their speaking exam.</p>

## APPENDIX E

### COLLABORATIVE LANGUAGE LEARNING LESSON PLAN EXAMPLE FROM SPANISH 231

## **Day 14: Thursday, May 24, 2018**

### **First hour: the entire class is conducted in the target language, in this case: Spanish**

Have students present their vocabulary video to the class. They were asked to choose any vocabulary word(s) and/or expression(s) from the chapter they were assigned that they wanted to communicate to the class in a meaningful and memorable way.

The students created these videos outside of class with their groups and then presented them in class.

(5 min): Vocabulary video group presentation: with a transition from the vocabulary from the chapter to the content of the listening activity that follows.

(5 min): Before listening to the mini conference: “témpano cultural” (cultural iceberg)—this is a pre-listening activity before listening to an activity designed by instructors in our department.

Mini conferences are mini lectures on a cultural topic, a concept that was associated with a previous textbook. A new set of mini conferences were designed for this course as a way of incorporating intercultural topics into this class. Mini conferences are basically longer texts that are read to the students with pauses for questions and clarification.

I usually show the students an image of an iceberg, for them to visualize one of the main points of the listening text to follow. The students discuss these questions in groups.

(5 min): We follow up with a full class review of their ideas about these questions and prepare for the vocabulary that follows these questions. We often relate the cultural topic to the students’ personal lives.

(5 min): Then students work together in small groups to familiarize themselves with the vocabulary for the mini conference, often times using their phones since some of the vocabulary is beyond what is in the textbook. I walk around and guide and facilitate this process.

(5 min): We review the meanings of the vocabulary words as a class before listening to the mini conference.

(15 min): The mini conference is then read at a normal pace, pausing for questions or elaboration about certain points of the content.

(10 min): Students then work together in pairs or small groups on completing the comprehension questions together. They are then able to review their answers online at home.

APPENDIX F

ACTION RESEARCH JOURNAL

## **Week 1**

The Spring semester began with a full section of Spanish 231 with 18 students. One student did not attend the first days of class, which brought the total number of students to 17. Then two more students dropped due to feeling stressed by the accelerated pace of the Spring course, two hours a day instead of one. The remaining 15 students filled out the pre-survey for the course during the first week and were explained the details of the study this semester. Everything felt a bit rushed in terms of the accelerated pace as well as trying to organize time for the study, but we were able to incorporate all the collaborative ice breaker activities as well as the pre-survey. There were two students coming from high school instead of from our program, which required a little bit of additional instruction for the pre-survey, which was designed more for a student who had a previous Spanish course in our department.

## **Week 2**

The students seem to be motivated to have a good semester and seem to work well together as a group. They took their first scheduled quiz and are getting used to the new style of class and book. There were some questions about the Supersite from a student who had used a textbook from a different publishing company for her previous course. I also had a couple of students with special requests about absences, which tends to be common in the Spring semester. There seemed to be a bit of confusion about class guidelines, which was clarified. There was also more English used both by students and by the instructor than in a normal semester, but the instructor wanted all the students to start the class in a comfortable way. The students also took their first in class writing and did rather well, indicating they as a class have a good foundation to build upon.

## **Week 3**

Half of the class came to office hours on Monday, all for different reasons. I may need to develop a system to sign up for office hours, so that there is time to spend with each student individually. We also had our mini-conference in class, which went over better than it usually does during the regular semester. I was so rushed for time during the first chapter, that we were not able to do a mini-conference at that time. They seemed interested and as if they enjoyed the topic, so I will have to find a way to make time for the more mini-conferences. They also took their first exam, and all did well—the lowest score was 80%. These students have a higher level than what is considered typical during a normal semester. I would like to brainstorm ways in which to make Spanish 231 more challenging for them to ease the transition to the next course.

## **Week 4**

So far, this week has felt hectic due to the increase in difficulty of the subject matter as well as the pace of the course. We also had the midterm focus group on Tuesday, which will yield good information. However, two students were absent that day. I really hope that the students are prepared for this next exam, but a lot will depend



on them and their level of study outside of class. I will have to stress this point on Thursday as well as give them the format of the exam on Friday itself. Overall, the class is going well. I hope that the focus group results display this as well. I will know more after meeting with the CRLT representative tomorrow. I also interviewed four students this week. Scheduling the interviews was a little complicated and that process could not have been started earlier, because I was waiting for the results of Exam 1 before determining who to interview.

### **Week 5**

This week flowed very well. We had one of the vocabulary video presentations and an extended speaking activity, which worked out well because it gave the students an idea of what to expect for the speaking exam that will be at the end of the semester. I think they enjoyed the speaking activity, because there were colloquial expressions from Spain that they were able to incorporate into mini conversations about topics that had been covered up until that point. I had allotted 15-20 minutes for the activity, but we could have used closer to 30 minutes with this group. The students have improved their Spanish considerably and are participating so much more in class as compared to the beginning of the semester.

### **Week 6**

We are nearing the end of the semester. The students have their last journal assignment due this week, that has been designed as a student reflection about the course in Spanish. They are looking forward to being done with the journals. They have worked so hard during this short semester. Everything was double time—15 weeks of material in only 7 weeks. There is one student who is repeatedly asking to take the final exam in the Fall. This is against our policy for weddings, but then the student produced a medical note for her grandfather. So, we decided to allow her to take an incomplete and take the final exam during the first few weeks of the Fall 2018 semester. In general, this is the only complicated administrative detail that occurred this semester. The students tended to get along well and grew to know one another quite well in a short amount of time. Many of them decided to take Spanish 232, the next course, together during the summer semester.

### **Week 7**

We have arrived to the last week of the semester. The only thing left is the final exam. The students took the post-survey during the last day of class, which was a review day. I am impressed and relieved that data collection this semester went as smoothly as it did. This in part is a testament to this specific group of students. They were very open and honest this semester about their language learning experience, which is not always easy to do. I think they did a fantastic job of balancing their coursework during this accelerated semester and felt the strength of the group dynamics in this course. I hope they are motivated to do well in the following course and somehow use their Spanish in the future.